

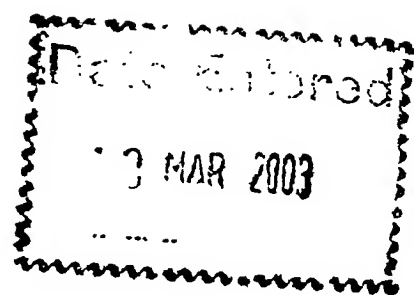


MR CHAMBERLAIN

HIS LIFE AND  
PUBLIC CAREER









PRAYCOTT.

JOSEPH CHAMBERLAIN (about 1862)

JOSEPH CHAMBERLAIN about 1862

This portrait is an early one, showing Mr. Chamberlain about eight years after he settled in Birmingham, and before he had become prominent even in local administration.



**M<sup>R</sup> CHAMBERLAIN**

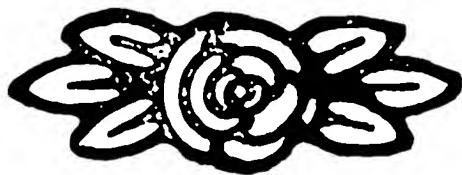
**HIS LIFE AND  
PUBLIC CAREER**

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**BY  
S . H . JEYES**

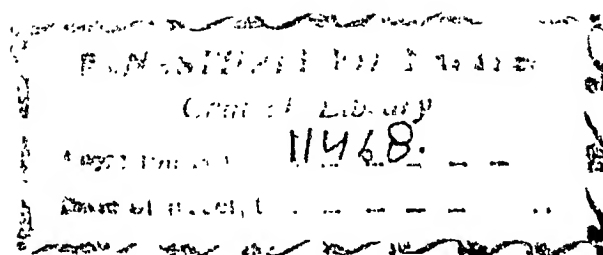
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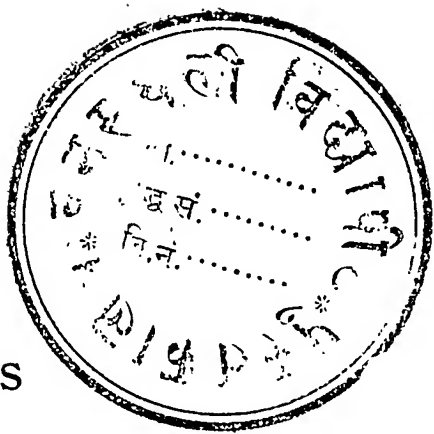
**VOLUME I**



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## INTRODUCTION

*“Πρὸς τὸ παρὸν αὐτίκα.”*

If any excuse were required for publishing the biography of a living Statesman it would be found in the fact that, from its outset to its latest development, his career has invariably been interesting. Since Mr. Chamberlain entered the House of Commons in 1876 he has never stood in the background of the Parliamentary picture. Overshadowed by the historic forms of Disraeli and Gladstone, of Bright and Salisbury, and competing, as it were, with the equally independent, equally anomalous, figures of Randolph Churchill and Parnell, Mr. Chamberlain was recognised from the first as a coming man—one who would not be long in coming. Denounced and praised, feared and admired by all Parties in turn, he has also, in less than thirty years, known a period in which he was simultaneously distrusted on both sides, and, by way of compensation, has gone through a great crisis in which he enjoyed the unqualified confidence of practically the whole nation. But hardly had he digested the eulogies which he received from all quarters for his work of conciliation in South Africa than, relying, perhaps, on his suddenly augmented influence, he ventured to proclaim, on his personal responsibility, a long-meditated policy which was certain to throw the whole country into acute controversy, and to strain, if not to sunder, the bonds of Party allegiance.

One reason why some of Mr. Chamberlain's critics complain that he springs surprises on the country, and others charge him with sheer want of principle, is that they do not realise how absolutely independent he is, and always has been, of any school of political theory. He collects and examines all the accessible facts and probabilities which together make up a "question of the day." On them, and apparently on them alone, he forms his opinion. This he will fortify with such general principles as happen to accord with it. Show him that the *data* were wrong or incomplete, and he will reverse his own judgment. The usual and hitherto approved method among English Statesmen is to start with a set of more or less abstract doctrines, to concentrate attention on the facts that fit into them, and explain away the others. The sound Liberal or the consistent Conservative thinks he has proved his case if he shows that the course which he intends to follow harmonises with the historic axioms of the one Party or the other—as though the government of a Nation were a game of Logic, and the division of Parties corresponded with some eternal Dichotomy in Things. For Mr. Chamberlain, neither political philosophy nor philosophical history has any attractions or terrors; and his unaffected indifference has been proved by his career. He has never, apparently, asked himself, on any practical question, "Which is the Liberal, which the Conservative, policy?" What he has wanted to know has been whether the Liberals or the Conservatives were, on this or that issue, right or nearer to being right. Thus, in his early days he acted with the Radicals because they were bent on destroying institutions which he regarded as mischievous in practice, and he flouted the official Liberalism of the day because it would not take part in the crusade he was

preaching. A few years later he was found working in partnership with the very men whom he had recently denounced, because in the meantime they had adopted several articles in his Programme and towards the others were observing a benevolent form of neutrality. Even more striking is the contrast between his attacks on the Church of England or the House of Lords and his subsequent defence of both. He was eager to disestablish the Church so long as he considered that its privileges were oppressive to the Nonconformists; he is now ready to protect it from aggression because the grievances under which the Dissenters were labouring have, he thinks, approached the vanishing point. He scoffed and scolded at the Peers, none more bitterly, when they resisted the extension of the Franchise, because they were perpetuating what seemed to him an injustice. He supported and praised them when they threw out the first Home Rule Bill because he thought that on this occasion they interpreted the true opinion and served the real interests of the country. He had been a Home Ruler himself so long as he believed that the Nationalists would be satisfied with what he regarded as safe and reasonable concessions. He became a Unionist when they stretched their demand beyond the limits which he had marked down as impassable.

It is conceivable, though not probable, that he might be reconverted to Home Rule if its advocates would reduce their claims to the original proportions, or if some wider scheme could be realised that would not involve the grave perils which he still apprehends. So, too, with regard to pledging the Imperial credit on a large scale for Land Purchase in Ireland, he opposed Mr. Gladstone's Bill because it was connected with and meant to facilitate



Home Rule. But he supported Mr. Balfour's Bill, and was induced, if somewhat reluctantly, to assent to Mr. Wyndham's recent proposals, because they were simply intended to mitigate agrarian discontent. Similarly, he attacked the Imperial policy of Disraeli, not because he sympathised with Non-intervention principles or loved to ensue Peace at any price, but because he believed that the British Government were, in Lord Salisbury's phrase, "backing the wrong horse." He had no faith in the self-reformation of Turkey, while he did cherish hopes of the Greek and other Christian communities in South-Eastern Europe. In order to counteract a foreign policy which he disliked, and promote the domestic legislation to which he was pledged, he associated himself with a Ministry whose misfortunes or mismanagement extinguished, for a time, what came to be known as the Little England school. He acquiesced in, and publicly justified, the retrocession of the Transvaal, and, openly at least, made no protest against the traditional policy of leaving the Colonies, so far as possible, to look after themselves. This, again, was an instance of his life-long habit of attending only to the pressing facts of the day and ignoring problems which he does not think ripe for settlement. Twenty years ago the general opinion of English politicians about South Africa was that nothing mattered very much so long as we held the Cape, and that no part of that Sub-Continent was less important than the Transvaal—unless it were Delagoa Bay!

But circumstances alter cases, and they also alter Mr. Chamberlain's opinions. Since the time when he was content—or permitted himself to be identified—with Mr. Gladstone's external policy, both Colonial and Foreign, an entirely new situation has arisen. The Protectionism

practised by the European Powers and by the United States had always been a hindrance and inconvenience to British enterprise, yet, in one way or another, our manufacturers and traders had generally managed, though with varying success, to hold their best markets—partly through the sufferance of Governments whose subjects could not altogether dispense with our goods. Within the last decade, however, we have had to face something more than subsidised competition. The American policy of High Protection, which has been developed into a science at Washington, and the Commercial Treaties among the Central Powers of the Continent constitute—in effect, if not in purpose—a standing warfare against our industrial position. One way of meeting the difficulty is, as Mr. Chamberlain has frequently pointed out during the last fifteen years, to keep our grip on the trade with those Dependencies which have not the power of directing fiscal legislation against us, and to develop new markets within our more or less recognised Spheres of Influence:

The other plan—supplementary not alternative—would be to enter into an arrangement with our Self-Governing Colonies under which we might, in the first instance, exercise the right of Retaliation against any country that practically closed its ports against the trade of the British Empire, and thus induce it to adopt a less rigidly exclusive policy. This marked the furthest point to which Mr. Chamberlain had, until last May, signified his willingness to proceed. It is true that, in almost every speech which he had made on Imperial Federation, he had spoken of a Customs Union as a vital part of the general scheme, but he had almost ostentatiously refrained from pressing this view either on Great Britain or the Colonies. It was generally regarded as a pious and strictly personal opinion

—not intended to bind his colleagues in the Ministry any more than Mr. Balfour's equally well-known views about Bimetallism and the establishment of a Roman Catholic University in Ireland.

It was, therefore, with universal astonishment that his speech on Preferential Tariffs at Birmingham on 15th May 1903 was received in the country. Still disclaiming the name of Protectionist, he repudiated that interpretation of Free Trade which lays down that "our only duty is to buy in the cheapest market without regard to whether we can sell." We must resumè the "power of free negotiation and, if necessary, of Retaliation." This was no abstract declaration. He desired, he said, that a discussion should be opened on this question, and, though the time had not yet come for a settlement, he clearly intimated that this issue would be laid before the people at the next General Election. In spite of this plain speaking, many people still doubted whether Mr. Chamberlain had any more serious intention than to divert public attention from Ministers' recent mismanagement of their London Education Bill. He was "dragging a red-herring across the scent," he was "flying a kite," and Reciprocity was only "out for an airing." In an age of fluid opinions and merging creeds, there are still many well-informed and thoughtful persons who honestly believe that no Statesman, not obviously demented, would venture to lay his hand on the ark of Free Trade—even to steady it. Critics who were quite ready to impute any kind of political iniquity to Mr. Chamberlain shrank from charging him with what they considered tactical insanity. We should hear no more of Reciprocity, they prophesied, than we were likely to hear of Old Age Pensions!

Mr. Chamberlain accepted the omen. Within the

week it happened that the question of Old Age Pensions was brought up in Parliament. Quite unexpectedly, he intervened in the Debate, and declared that both his derided policies could be carried out together. The funds to provide for the wants of the aged and deserving poor might be supplied by the Duties levied on foreign imports. He had put his foot forward and evidently did not mean to draw it back.

Naturally, the Opposition Leaders demanded an explanation. How far did the view put forward by the Colonial Secretary represent the collective opinion of the Cabinet? On 28th May Mr. Balfour, in the House of Commons, announced a general concurrence with his colleague, while he intimated that the question was not immediate, and laid down that politicians acting together in the same Ministry are not to be debarred from "taking an independent line on subjects which are not part of the momentary policy of the Government." When Mr. Chamberlain rose—again, contrary to expectation—he was so far from seeking to minimise his previous declaration, that he went further than he had gone before, inasmuch as he described the practical measures by which he proposed that his policy should be carried out. The first thing would be to get a Mandate from the people of the United Kingdom; the second, to summon a Conference of representatives of the Self-Governing Colonies; the third, to negotiate a satisfactory arrangement under which the Colonies would give us as much as we gave them.

To make his case complete, he indicated the arguments by which he would try to obtain the necessary Mandate. He admitted it would be necessary to tax food, and, for the sake of discussion, estimated that three-fourths of the Duty would be paid by the working classes. But the

whole of the proceeds should go back to them, and the other quarter be given them as well. They should have Old Age Pensions, they would earn increased wages, and they would be protected against the unfair competition of goods sold below cost price by the great foreign Trusts and Combinations.

It should be pointed out that, however Mr. Chamberlain may have changed his attitude towards other questions, on this subject the opinions that he holds to-day are but the logical development of those which he has long maintained. It is true that in 1881 he declared that a tax on food meant a fall in wages. Obviously, it would involve a decline in the purchasing power of a fixed number of weekly shillings. But it is his contention and belief that a general rise in the price of commodities must be accompanied by an equally general augmentation of wages. This, of course, is one of the propositions which he has undertaken to establish to the satisfaction of the country. Again, in 1885 he denounced as "quackery" the proposal to encourage agriculture by imposing a duty of five, ten, or even fifteen shillings a quarter on foreign wheat. Though he used similar, and even stronger, language on several other occasions, it will be found that he was always opposing a plan for assisting one class in the United Kingdom at the expense of another class. What he is now advocating is, we are told, to benefit all classes together, and all countries alike within the Empire. The case which he has now partially expounded, in a series of speeches delivered in different parts of the country, may be sound or unsound, his policy may be mischievous or prudent, but he cannot in this respect be charged with serious inconsistency. It is an essential and fundamental argu-

ment with him that in the last few years the economic position of this country has been changed by foreign legislation.

It is easy to label a public man who has changed sides on more than one question of the day as an Opportunist, a *Realpolitiker*, and to suggest that he has been influenced by ambition, love of applause, self-conceit, or resentment. But in dealing with a contemporary politician it is more mannerly and far safer to abstain from moral judgments—neither imputing the lower motives nor claiming the higher virtues. In the following pages no attempt will be made to go behind those facts and considerations which evidently must have operated on Mr. Chamberlain's mind, and which explain his conduct at every crisis, whether we accept or repudiate the conclusion at which he has arrived. But in one sense it must be admitted that he always has been, and probably will remain to the end, an Opportunist. What line he will take on any new question, or one which has been materially modified by recent events, it is impossible to conjecture, since, as we have seen, he is guided not at all by abstract principles or political formulas. He applies to Statecraft the rule which the late Lord Russell of Killowen so successfully observed at the Bar—if only you will get up the facts of a case, it is ten to one you need not trouble yourself about the law. That is why Mr. Chamberlain's career, like Mr. Gladstone's, has been puzzling to commentators who have been trained in the political philosophy of the Schools, and naturally expect their contemporaries to conform to one or another of the types exemplified by the somewhat abstract figures presented in standard histories of England.

Because Mr. Chamberlain is a man of business it is sometimes assumed that his political judgment is decided

by a mere calculation of the material results to be expected from this or that course of action—what does the Country, or the Party, or the Statesman, stand to gain or lose? As a matter of fact, Mr. Chamberlain is, perhaps, the most sentimental, the most emotional, of the leading public men in England. Quick to anger and indignation, he is equally capable of enthusiasm and admiration, and in expressing either kind of feeling he is liable to exceed the ordinary reserve of public life in this country. His attacks and retorts on adversaries in the House of Commons have not been more scornful and exasperating than his criticisms on politicians and publicists in foreign countries who have assailed the interests or the reputation of Great Britain. Never has any public man more utterly disregarded the old maxim about treating enemies as if they might one day become friends, and regarding friends as if they might in future turn enemies. Mr. Chamberlain, on the contrary, has always been equally warm as ally and antagonist, and, before he starts on a new campaign, makes his advance certain by burning his boats behind him. If he were, as he has often been represented, a cool and scheming politician, playing for the first place in the State, he would have long ago taught himself not to excite those personal animosities in Parliament which would make it exceedingly difficult for him to manage the House of Commons, and he would have been especially careful not to put himself forward in Europe as the very exemplar of what our candid friends abroad regard as British insolence and aggressiveness. As Leader of the House of Commons, he would have to contend with many personal adversaries who would do their best to wreck all his schemes, while a Government in which he were Prime Minister would have few friends among foreign

Statesmen. All this Mr. Chamberlain quite understands. But his governing passion, one that no consideration of self-interest or even of public advantage can control, is what may be called a graduated patriotism—devotion to the City which he has helped to construct and adorn, and which has always supported him throughout the vicissitudes of his career; devotion to the Country which he believes to be incomparably the best and finest in the world; devotion to the Empire which he hopes to consolidate, and with which he desires that his name shall be imperishably associated.

Although in domestic affairs Mr. Chamberlain's policy has been more or less limited by the circumstances of the day and the probabilities of the immediate future, it will be conceded, by those who most sincerely deprecate his action, that in regard to the Colonies he takes long views. The fault charged against him is that he seeks to reach at once what would be more safely regarded as the goal of a distant endeavour—that he wishes to impose as a task for the next Parliament, or the one after, what should be treated as a vision for the optimists of another generation. Whatever may be the verdict of the electors on the great issues which he has raised, it is undeniable that this "man with the mayoral mind" has thrown a ray of Idealism on what had long been the most arid department of public life in England. The methods he proposes may be abjured by his countrymen, but they will give him credit for developing a noble conception, for bringing back into "practical politics" a project which had been abandoned as hopelessly Utopian by the men who originated it. Whatever may be the judgment of posterity on Mr. Chamberlain's work at the Colonial Office—suddenly cut short by his resignation in September—he has rendered



it impossible for his successors to acquiesce in the theory laid down, about twenty years ago, by that capable and accomplished administrator, the late Lord Blachford, that the duty of Downing Street was to secure that the connection between the Mother Country and the Colonies, "while it lasted, should be as profitable to both parties, and the separation, when it should come, as amicable, as possible." That paralysing doctrine has been blown away for ever. Other Statesmen may think it prudent to move more slowly, or to move in a different direction, than the Minister who hoped in a few years to reorganise and revivify every part of the British Empire at once *nil actum credens dum quid superesset agendum*. But none, it is safe to say, will venture to proclaim a creed of temporising despondency.

Probably it would not be going too far to suggest that Mr. Chamberlain, while still a lad in Birmingham, had already formed the purpose of making a name for himself in Parliament. He may have dreamed, perhaps, of attaining even a higher position than he has yet filled. All his studies and most of his amusements, consciously or unconsciously, were directed towards public life, and his interest in questions of the day was as keen and controversial when he was speaking on a Motion in the Edgbaston Debating Society as it is when he is called on to justify his policy in the House of Commons. The political activity which was the relaxation of his early manhood did not become drudgery after he had made it the serious business of his life. He is seldom tired, because he is never bored, by public life. Moreover, he has retained his faith in Representative Institutions, and cherishes his youthful admiration for the House of Commons as the greatest Free Assembly in the world. It has become the

fashion amongst some of those superior amateurs who oblige the country by taking part in public business—and claiming their share in any good things that may be going—to affect an indulgent contempt for the machinery by which our liberties are maintained. The British Constitution would be very well, we are told, if only there was no House of Commons! This facile cynicism has never touched Mr. Chamberlain. He was speaking from his heart when he declared, at a Mansion-House Banquet held on 15th October 1902, that he felt a profound reverence for “the venerable Mother of Parliaments.” He never approached it, he said, without a consciousness of apprehension and nervousness.

“To me the House of Commons is (he said) a great and an august personality. No doubt it is composed of very various elements—made up of Parties and sections and individuals—with many of whom I differ, and some of whom I agree with you in finding it very difficult to respect; but the House of Commons, in its corporate capacity, towers above them all, and justifies the respect and the affection in which, I believe, it is still regarded. I for one do not object to any criticism of any of the individuals who constitute the House of Commons, and, indeed, I think that I myself have sometimes indulged in that kind of criticism; but I am inclined, with my right honourable friend, Mr. Balfour, to resent the attacks which are sometimes made upon the House of Commons as a whole. The House of Commons is, in my opinion, the greatest of human Institutions, and it would not be that if it did not contain some human weaknesses, and among them I am disposed to count a certain over-confidence in its own great resources, which causes it to undertake occasionally more than it can perform. And, perhaps, also, I should add, a want

occasionally of a due sense of proportion, which induces it to pay less attention to essentials, and more to trivial details, than would be absolutely wise. I have heard the House of Commons compared to an elephant, which can rend an oak and pick up a pin, and I have sometimes thought that the House of Commons devotes too much time to filling its pin-cushion. But, my Lords and Gentlemen, these are the spots on the sun. If there are defects, they are only the foil to its virtues. The House of Commons, as I understand, is the natural personification of the national qualities that have made us great, of justice and generosity. Its industry is unequalled, its knowledge is almost universal. By its undying love of freedom, coupled as it has been with its deep attachment to orderly government, the House of Commons has made us what we are, and has kept for us our place among the nations of the world."

Opinions differ sharply as to Mr. Chamberlain's public character and policy, even as to his motives and methods, but there can be no doubt that, like the famous Statesman on whose cardinal policy he has now proposed to make a formidable inroad, he is a "great Member of Parliament."

*December, 1903.*

## CHAPTER I

### EARLY LIFE

The father of the future Statesman was Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, a wholesale boot-and-shoe manufacturer in the City of London, and his mother was the daughter of Mr. Henry Harben, and sister of Sir Henry Harben, of Warnham Lodge, in Sussex. The business was carried on in the same premises (36 Milk Street) and under the same name for nearly 150 years. The Chamberlain family are descended from a Daniel Chamberlain, a maltster at Laycock, in Wiltshire, where he died in 1760. His son William set up in business in London as a cordwainer, and became Master of the Cordwainers' Company—a position which was afterwards held by two of his sons and three grandsons, including Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, senior. The association of the family with this ancient Company was commemorated in 1896, when the Colonial Secretary received an address in which a graceful reference was made to the old-standing connection; in reply, he spoke with pride of the part his ancestors had taken in the proceedings of the Company, and the interest they had felt in upholding its rights and privileges.

Mr. Chamberlain's parents were married in 1834. Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, the eldest son, was born on 8th July, 1836. The second, Mr. Richard Chamberlain, died only a few years ago. There are three other brothers living (Arthur, Herbert, and Walter), besides three married sisters. At the time of Joseph Chamberlain's birth, and for some years afterwards, the family lived at 3 Grove Hill

Terrace, Camberwell. At the age of eight, the lad was sent to a preparatory school, kept by Miss Pace, at 122 Camberwell Grove, and some of her reminiscences of her distinguished pupil have been recorded by Miss N. Murrel Marris,<sup>1</sup> in *The Right Honourable Joseph Chamberlain, the Man and the Statesman*.

Miss Pace, who died at the age of eighty-six in March of the present year (1903), was often revisited by her old pupil after he had become a distinguished man. According to her recollection, he did not, even as a boy, care much for games; though sociable enough, he was almost too anxious about his lessons, and, on his mother's testimony, had already developed the habit of asking questions which it was not easy to answer.

In 1845 the family removed to 25 Highbury Place, Islington (where they remained for many years), and the eldest son was placed under the charge of the Rev. Arthur Johnson, whom his pupil remembers as a good scholar and excellent teacher. It was not till he was fourteen years old that the boy was sent to University College School, where he was taught Greek and Latin, but showed most proficiency in Mathematics, Natural Philosophy, and French—subjects in which he gained prizes. Though he was thought clever by his masters, and showed great earnestness and industry in his work, there is no tradition that he was singled out by the judgment of his contemporaries as destined for future distinction. Indeed, his qualities were not those which appeal to the admiration of schoolboys. Though the serious and somewhat sombre institution in Gower Street was by no means given over to the worship of Muscular Christianity—officially, it recognized neither aspect of that educational deity—it would have been difficult probably for a boy to become a “school hero” unless he distinguished himself in some form of

<sup>1</sup> For many of the personal details here given, the writer is indebted to this book, recently published by Messrs. Hutchinson & Co. Others are reproduced from his own *Joseph Chamberlain*, published in 1896, by Messrs. Bliss, Sands, & Foster.

athletic sport, and played an active part in the social life of the place.

Mr. Chamberlain has never made any direct attack on the excessive modern devotion to sport and out-door games. Indeed, the other day, in his voyage home from South Africa, he distributed the prizes for the customary matches on board ship, and went so far as to observe, half humorously, that athletics were not altogether without their uses! His life-long abstinence from such pursuits, even from the exercise which many sedentary workers believe to be essential to health, has probably been due less to principle than to inclination. It has always amused him more to work his mind than his body, and if he sacrificed something by shutting himself from the *camaraderie* of the playing fields, the loss was more than compensated by the intellectual start which he gained over many of his contemporaries. There was no time to waste in his school life: he was taken away from Gower Street at the age of sixteen, having only stayed sufficiently long to lay the foundations for self-education in the future, and to form a few friendships that have survived a strenuous and pre-occupied career. But his recollections of his school-days are by no means unpleasant, and not long ago he paid a visit to Gower Street, and spoke of his early days quite in the accepted style of the typical "Old Boy" who has come down to a School festivity.

He had been invited to unveil, on 5th November 1902, a tablet erected to the memory of twelve former pupils of the school who had lost their lives in the South African War. It was, he said, fifty years almost to a day since he last entered that building to receive certain prizes from the Lord Mayor, which with the inscription of the old school motto, still rested on his library shelves and were not the least interesting of the memorials of his boyhood:—

"When that Lord Mayor, long since passed away, spoke to me words of congratulation and encouragement,"

Mr. Chamberlain continued, "I little thought that at a later time I should receive from his eminent successor the highest honour which the City of London is able to give. But although I have got to bridge over half a century in order to recall those long-past days, I can still sympathize with the boys who are now repeating my experience at the outset of their careers, which I sincerely hope will be honourable to them, and useful to their country. I can remember many of the incidents of my school life, and I entertain always a most kindly sentiment and regard for my old schoolfellows and my old teachers. I can call up to-day, as if it was yesterday, the portly form of Professor Key, most kindly of Headmasters, marching solemnly to call to order a somewhat unruly class. I can recall my dear old friend Professor Cook enforcing his mathematical instruction with the oft-repeated assertion that 'Never in the whole course of his life had he met boys so bad as we were' and that 'to attempt to get into our heads the mysteries of algebra was like firing a cannon-ball into a mountain of mud.' Yet, this terrible comparison did not prevent him from exhibiting on many occasions the greatest pride and delight in the proficiency of his scholars. I remember also Professor Merlet, that quaint and genial Frenchman, endeavouring to instil into our British understandings the beauties of Molière, and, in the excitement of his recital, acting the parts he read as if he had just come from the Français. I remember all this, and more; and I remember my school mates, and rejoice that so many of them have subsequently achieved distinction. There were the late Professor Jevons, Sir Arthur Charles, Sir Ralph Littler, K.C., who is present to-day, Mr. Prevost, the Governor of the Bank of England, who is also present, Sir Edwin Lawrence, also present, and my friend and old schoolfellow Sir Michael Foster, one of the most distinguished of our men of science. Although I have in some measure lost touch with your work, yet I could not resist the call which was made upon me,

even in the midst of exceptional pressure, to come once more amongst you, to show how proud I am that, in a great crisis of our national history, our old school should have done its duty.

. . . . .  
“I think we may all join in thankfulness that at no previous time have our soldiers exhibited more courage, more endurance, more cheerfulness in almost unexampled hardships, that never was a war carried on with greater humanity, with a more complete absence of wilful outrage and unnecessary severity, and that never did the people of this country manifest greater calmness in reverses, less vindictiveness in the hour of victory, and greater tenacity and resolution in the pursuit of the objects which they believed to be right and just. Surely, then, we are glad that in this great drama which we have been enacting our school should have had its part. As the Headmaster has said, it is not a military institution. It cannot appeal to those traditions which, in other cases, stimulate men to seek their share of danger and exertion; but, in spite of that, no small contingent of our old scholars went to the front to share in all respects the hardships of the campaign; and we rejoice to know that they did well—we rejoice in that many of them have been honoured by their King, and won the gratitude of their country. But death has claimed its tribute also—a proportion far too large having perished on the field of battle, or died in other ways for their country. It is to commemorate these men—their heroism and devotion—that to-day we dedicate a tablet upon the walls of the school in which so much of their boyhood was passed. It is good for a school like this to have its traditions of self-sacrifice. This memorial, which I am proud to unveil, is even more a lesson and an example to the living than it is a tribute to the dead. I hope also that it may, as the Headmaster has suggested, afford some consolation to the relatives and friends of those whom we have lost, to know that their memory will



be kept green by their old school, their names enshrined for ever in its annals, and the school itself will always be proud of the record which they have left behind them."

In his time, Mr. Chamberlain said, the school had been a good school. The education, so far as it went, was excellent and thorough, and he had many times felt gratitude to it. Incidentally, though without any specially apparent sense of regret, he referred to his lack of an academic training. . Possibly he is conscious, as well he may be, that what he has lost in the way of intellectual discipline is more than made up to him by never having had the edge taken from his natural keenness, by having always struck out his own line of thought and never being, more or less, compelled to conform to an average standard. However admirable or exalted may be the *genius loci*, it is difficult for a man to absorb it without giving up something of his own nature.

But though Mr. Chamberlain has remained, through his career, vigorously and almost defiantly individual, he has never disparaged the influence of the old Universities, while in the establishment and support of similar institutions of a more modern type, at Birmingham especially, he has taken an active part. On this occasion he spoke with approval of the greater liberality shown by the Governments in our Colonies, as well as in Germany and the United States, in bringing the Higher Education within reach of the people. He would like to see the time when, in this country, the higher places in factories, work-shops, and counting-houses should be reserved for men who could show, by their University careers, that they deserved the positions which were offered to them. On the other hand, as was natural in a man who has raised himself to the chief places in the State by sheer force of will and intellect, he seems to attach less value to a general elevation of the national average of mental attainment than to giving exceptional talent the best opportunities of development. "What is it," he asked, "that makes a country?" Of



#### BIRTHPLACE. 188 THE GROVE, CAMBERWELL

Though Mr. Chamberlain has been closely associated with Birmingham since his early manhood, he is not a native of that city. He was born in Camberwell, the part of South London which also produced Robert Browning. In 1836, the year of his birth, his father's house was known as No. 3 Grove Hill Terrace, but it is now 188 The Grove. It is a semi-detached building, more substantial than showy, partly shaded by chestnut-trees, elms, and poplars, and having a laurel-bordered lawn in front.



*HODDER & STOUGHTON.*

BIRTHPLACE, 188 THE GROVE, CAMBERWELL



course you may say, "the general qualities of the people their resolution, their intelligence, their pertinacity, and many other good qualities! Yes, but that is not all, and it is not the main creative feature of a great nation. The greatness of a nation is made by its greatest men. It is those we want to educate."

This view was more fully expounded in an Address which Mr. Chamberlain delivered on 17th January 1901, as Chancellor of the New Birmingham University:—

"... He thought it was the duty of the nation, it was necessary to the welfare and happiness of the nation, that every child should have the simple means of recreation which even elementary education afforded, and the means of self-improvement; but we should make a great mistake if we thought that as a commercial investment this expenditure was likely to bring a great return. Its return was the general happiness of the nation; but it did not secure our commercial position. He should like to make that perfectly clear, and he would remind them that all history showed that progress, national progress, of every kind depended upon certain individuals rather than upon the mass. Whether they took religion or literature, or political government, or art, or commerce, in all these cases of new ideas, the great steps had been made by individuals of superior quality and genius, who had, as it were, dragged the mass of the nation up one step to a higher level. And so it must be in regard to material progress. The position of the nation to-day was due to the efforts of men like Watt, Arkwright, or in our own time to the Armstrongs, the Whitworths, the Kelvins, and the Siemenses. These were the men who, by their discoveries, by their remarkable genius, had produced the ideas upon which others had acted, and which had permeated the whole mass of the nation and the whole of its proceedings. Therefore, what we had to do—and that was their special task and object—was to produce more of these great men. He admitted this might be impossible. It might be said, very

likely truly, that genius was born and not made; but this, at least, they could do. They could, at least, multiply tenfold the number of those who were qualified to be the assistants and the interpreters of these men, who could take their ideas and carry them into practical operation, and give to them practical application in connection with the different walks of life to which they must devote themselves. That was the object, that was the task, to which he thought the University of Birmingham must, so far as its distinctive and special work was concerned, deliberately set itself. They had made a little progress, although they were still at the beginning of things."

The Chamberlains were Unitarians, and Unitarians of the stricter order. There are some members of that thoughtful community whose opinions it would be difficult to distinguish from those of Churchmen who do not go to church. They are Agnostics in all but name, and only to be reckoned as Nonconformists because they do not belong to the Establishment. But there was none of this doctrinal laxity in the congregations of which Mr. Chamberlain's father was a well-known and highly-respected member. When he died at Birmingham in 1874, a tablet was erected at Unity Church, in Upper Street, Islington, to commemorate one who "for more than fifty years was a consistent worshipper in Carter Lane Chapel, City, and afterwards in this Church, and a generous supporter of their connected institutions." There was, perhaps, no body of Nonconformists more eager than the practising Unitarians of this period to assert the essential principles of dissent from Church of England dogma, keener in upholding the claims of Religious Equality, more persistent in the attempt to separate Elementary Education from doctrinal influence. *Le Clericalisme, voilà l'ennemi!*

If with zeal in this direction there was combined a certain narrowness of view, if the assailants of Orthodoxy were not themselves exempt from bigotry, it must be re-

membered that the attitude of Churchmen at this time—of all but an enlightened minority who had scarcely yet been enabled to make their teaching and example felt in the country at large—was somewhat provocative and contemptuous. Between Church and Chapel a sharp line was drawn—social as well as political. The two factions maintained, in almost every town, a standing controversy, practically unmitigated by personal friendships or even by business relationships. The Church people patronised the orthodox butcher and grocer, nor would the Dissenters buy their meat or sugar except from a Nonconformist brother. In some of the larger villages and smaller towns this sectarian bitterness still exists, but it is gradually passing away, and the temporary revival of it, caused by the controversies over the 1902 Education Act, has surprised many tolerant, easy-going Londoners whose memories do not stretch back more than thirty or forty years.

The feud was at its height during Mr. Chamberlain's boyhood and early manhood, and he threw himself into the fight with all the ardour of a keen, practical intellect to which the combat was not less attractive than the cause. It has been said of Mr. Chamberlain that he works in blinkers—sees everything in front of him, but nothing behind or on either side. With a certain reservation, the verdict is, perhaps, correct. Once he has made up his mind as to the point he wishes to reach, he goes straight at it: he has none of the Academical dubiety, the moral misgiving, which puzzle and annoy the earnest, purblind partisan. Never in his career has Mr. Chamberlain been more decided in his opinions, or more energetic in advocating them, than he was when almost as a lad, he first began to feel an interest in public affairs. For this intellectual certainty and practical vigour he is, of course, chiefly indebted to his natural qualities; but so eminently impressionable and receptive a mind must also have been greatly influenced by his surroundings. These, as we have



seen, were those of a prosperous, Nonconformist household in what is sometimes called the Upper Middle Class—a vile phrase, but intelligible.

Mentally, this class was the very antithesis of what is connoted by *bourgeoisie*. Nowhere in the England of the first half of last century was there a brighter alertness of the intellect, or more serious study of the great problems of Life and Thought, than among the cultivated Radicals of that era. If the doctrines of Bentham and the two Mills, and other propagators of French Revolutionism, adapted and deodorised for British consumption, were accepted at their face value, if their rotundity served to conceal the inner vacuum, they yet stimulated the interest which they purported to satisfy; they made young men think, and prompted them to live and work for the greater diffusion of happiness among mankind. If they are largely obsolete, it is because they have, in this country at least, accomplished most of their work. They created the demand for Reform, and carried it into effect. We see them simmering to-day, scarcely changed in their type, among peoples whose institutions have developed less rapidly than our own. The passive form of Nihilism is little more than our Philosophic Radicalism translated into Russian; possibly it would not be more dangerous to the State, or to honest Authority, if it were allowed equal liberty of expression. If we now realise that the teachings that inspired the Liberalism of a generation which has mostly passed away were both one-sided and incomplete, we must also admit that they were instruments of almost unmixed good—which is much the same as saying that they were true for their own time. And they had the pre-eminent merit of being based, not on Sentiment, but purely on Reason, so that they could be—as, in fact, they have been—modified to fit altered circumstances.

There are many good Conservatives, in Parliament and outside it, who, for a considerable number of their

thinking years, believed that Monarchy was a useless and expensive anachronism, the House of Lords a relic and stronghold of Feudal oppression, and the Church of England an embodiment of Priestcraft. Nor, in changing their practical opinions, have they consciously abandoned the principles from which they had drawn their original inferences. They have simply absorbed a new set of facts. This is very often the explanation of what is called inconsistency in politicians. In some cases, the Statesman moves while the Party stands still; in others, it is the Party that advances and the old Leader who is stationary. It is easy to be cynical about public life; but in modern times, since legislators have become "like bees in a glass-hive", the opprobrium that would be incurred by treachery to one's Party may, as a rule, be trusted to counterbalance the mere inducements of Place. It is as ridiculous for Mr. Chamberlain's detractors to suggest that he has changed his views in order to gratify his ambition, as it would be for any panegyrist to argue that his opinions at the present day are identical with those which he maintained when he entered Parliament. No attempt of either sort will be made in these pages, which are intended to be mainly a record of his public career, and an account of the conditions and circumstances in which it has been passed.

At the age of sixteen he began life: his education was then complete, so far as education consists in being taught by schoolmasters. He was put into his father's business in the City, and kept to it for a couple of years, though he managed to find time to attend scientific lectures at the Polytechnic, and amused himself with taking part in private theatricals. He even wrote a farce in one act, and performed in it. But, in 1854, a change took place in his prospects. His family were connected by marriage with Mr. John Nettlefold, a member of the well-known firm of wood-screw makers at Birmingham. They had purchased the English rights in an American

patent for improved machinery, and they determined to reorganise their business on a broader basis, building new works, bringing in more capital, and introducing fresh blood. Mr. Chamberlain, senior, obtained an interest in the concern, and the son, then eighteen years old, was sent as his representative in that already rising city. He threw himself into trade with all his energy, and it is stated—nor is it difficult to believe—that the rapid success of the firm was due in no slight degree to his hard work and commercial aptitude. After a period of some anxiety and struggle, Nettlefolds succeeded in turning out a better article at a lower price than their competitors, and in time they acquired almost a monopoly in their line of business. For some years past the trade had been carried on almost at a loss, so severe were the “cutting rates” set up by the double competition of foreign rivals and small firms at home working for a bare subsistence. In order to place affairs on a more remunerative footing, Nettlefolds bought out two of their chief rivals and all the smaller men who were willing to accept a reasonable offer. The others had to look after themselves—it is the way of the business world, as it always will be—until the country turns Socialist. Then, probably, we should try to starve out other nations.

There were ten years (1875–1885) in Mr. Chamberlain’s life during which he was even more bitterly assailed by Conservatives than by Liberals from 1886 to 1900, and in the former period some of his adversaries did not scruple to represent him as having taken the leading part in an organised system of commercial oppression. His firm, of course, made enemies, and its success could not be achieved without doing injury to less enterprising rivals; but when the evidence against Nettlefolds came to be sifted it showed that their behaviour had been somewhat exceptionally liberal. The member of Parliament who had repeated these vague charges was so satisfied of his mistake that, without any menace of legal

proceedings, he withdrew them altogether, and added a very handsome apology. An important firm in the same way of business, of very old standing in Birmingham, which had enjoyed every opportunity of knowing the details of the transactions impugned, declared that "Mr. Chamberlain's actions were highly beneficial to those connected with the trade, and beneficent to those whose businesses were purchased on such liberal terms; also to those who, like ourselves, remained in the trade, as well as to his own firm." The negotiations, they said, had been conducted in an honourable and courteous manner, and they denounced, as "false and absurd," the report that threats had been made to crush out the smaller makers. Here the question may be left for those who care to investigate it further. Clearly, it should never have been raised, except on direct and unassailable proof. Such foundation as may ever have existed for these imputations against Mr. Chamberlain lies in the probability that in these transactions, as in all others, he acted like a man who means to have his own way, and that on this occasion he got it. But this sort of victory has to be paid for. The "other man," not unnaturally, thinks he has been ill-treated, and goes through life grumbling over his grievance. It is simpler to attribute one's failures to the sharp practice of a rival than to confess inferiority.

The Birmingham of fifty years ago was a very different place from the present "Capital of the Midlands,"—owning, as it does, some of the finest Municipal libraries and scientific collections in the United Kingdom, the home of a vigorous young University, and constantly visited by the best actors and musicians of the day. For a young man living in lodgings, the evenings, unless he spent them in the vulgar pleasures which are everywhere easy of access, Birmingham, when Mr. Chamberlain first took up his residence there, would have been a dull place, though he had many friends and connections, if

he had not discovered resources within himself. He was always a reader, and in his evenings he carried on his study of English and French literature, of which he acquired a considerable knowledge, though it must be admitted that his speeches and Magazine articles contain no direct proof of any wide range of subjects. But the same may be said of many other public men (of Lord Salisbury, for instance), whose high cultivation has never been called into question. Mr. Chamberlain's speeches and writings have been practically confined to politics, and he seldom or never permits himself the luxury of digression. The influence of his reading is to be seen chiefly in his style, which, without any especial claim to polish or purity, is noticeably free from superfluous ornamentation. The short, vigorous sentences go straight to the mark, and long practice has made him so correct that a faithful *verbatim* report would reveal very few slips in grammar, and not many repetitions or loose expressions. This, it may be mentioned, is a quality very rarely attained by English orators, except those who write out their words beforehand, and either learn them by heart or read them off without variation from the prepared text—generally a very ineffective method, especially in the House of Commons, where a speech is expected to bear close relation to the preceding Debate. Even on the platform, an orator who relies entirely on his preparation is apt to be disconcerted by unforeseen incidents or hostile interruptions. Mr. Chamberlain, on the other hand, delights in throwing off *impromptu* remarks—a habit which has sometimes got him into serious difficulties—and positively courts interruptions, to which he never fails to make a neat and telling rejoinder. But this readiness has only been acquired by assiduous training, and it is said that his early speeches were as laboriously “got up” as those of orators who never gain the power of improvisation.

He began early. He had not lived long in Birming-

ham before he established a Club for the working-men employed by his firm, and in the Night School attached to this institution he gave lessons and lectures. At the Sunday School for young men and women connected with the Unitarian community he was a regular teacher, and was first President of the Young Men's Mutual Improvement Society. His first speech at the Birmingham and Edgbaston Debating Society was delivered against the Motion that "the character and conduct of Oliver Cromwell do not entitle him to the admiration of posterity." Four years later, Miss Marris records, he brought forward, on his own account, a Vote of Censure on a series of speeches in which Mr. Bright had been expounding the views of his Radical colleagues on Foreign Policy. With the memories of the Crimea and the Indian Mutiny fresh in the minds of his countrymen, Mr. Bright insisted that the empire was large enough—too large—already. The Colonies were a burden on the Mother Country—none of them paid their way except Australia. This was the accepted theory of the Radical Party, nor, to tell the truth, did Conservatives, as a rule, venture to oppose it.

It is interesting, therefore, to find the future Imperialist, at twenty-two years of age, convinced that it was always necessary for a nation to be prepared for self-defence, denying that the Aristocracy had always been responsible for war, and asserting that since 1688 we had been engaged in no foreign struggle not demanded by the People. In this year (1858) he was elected Treasurer of the Debating Society. In 1859 he became Secretary, and asked the Lord-Lieutenant of the County for permission to form from its members a company of Rifle Volunteers. On this request being refused, he wrote to assure his Lordship that the service of a very fine company of men had been lost! In 1861 he became Vice-president of the Society, and President in 1863. The last honour was renewed in 1896, when he delivered a brief Address, in

which he recalled humorous recollections of the Society thirty-three years before. It was, he said, "rather a Radical body," and, on an unexpected surplus of £7 being disclosed, it was proposed by the Secretary, and unanimously carried, that the money should be spent in buying a Tory!

In 1863 Mr. Chamberlain was already a prosperous and well-known man in Birmingham, with an assured future in its commercial and Municipal life. His energy was increased rather than diminished by a bereavement which he experienced in that year. In 1861 he had married Miss Harriet Kenrick, the sister of an intimate friend, Mr. William Kenrick (who afterwards married Miss Mary Chamberlain); but the union was dissolved by the death of Mrs. Chamberlain, on the birth of her second child (Mr. Austen Chamberlain).

These were the days of the Reform agitation in which Mr. Bright played so conspicuous a part, and Mr. Chamberlain was a regular and enthusiastic, if also a critical, attendant at the Radical meetings. In 1865 the Liberal Association was formed in Birmingham, and Mr. Chamberlain was one of the earliest members; but in 1868 (Mr. Disraeli's Reform Bill having passed in the meantime) it was reorganised on a new basis, so as to include representatives of the newly-enfranchised working-men householders. It was this local body which afterwards developed into the "Caucus." The original plan was for every Ward in Birmingham to elect a Ward Committee, three representatives of which were put on the Executive Committee, and twenty-four on the General Committee—a body which expanded gradually from hundreds to thousands. The real power, therefore, lay in the hands, first, of the Executive Committee, and, when this in turn became unwieldy from size, in those of the Management Committee, which prepared the agenda for the Executive Committee. Gradually, but surely, the guidance of the whole association was absorbed by the very capable and

energetic Secretary, Mr. Francis Schnadhorst, who ultimately became Chief Manager for the Liberal Party (in which capacity he rendered most efficient service), and was afterwards allowed to advise its Leaders on matters of high policy. Here he was venturing on matters he did not understand, and it is no secret that he was largely responsible for Mr. Gladstone's famous miscalculation in 1886. But in 1868 he was a comparatively modest and highly useful person. It was due in no slight degree to his excellent arrangements that, at the General Election of that year, all the members for Birmingham were Liberals, though the Conservatives had been reasonably hopeful of capturing one of the three "corners" of the new Constituency. In this contest Mr. Chamberlain took an active part, and made frequent platform speeches.

Almost the first use that Mr. Gladstone had made of his majority in the new Parliament was to pass through the House of Commons a Bill for the Disestablishment of the Irish Church, and it was considered advisable to "get up steam in the country" in order to induce the Lords not to reject the Measure. The General Election had been avowedly fought on this issue—the Upper House having rejected in the previous Parliament the Suspensory Bill for preventing fresh appointments being made, and new interests created, in the Irish Church. There was no doubt that the great majority of the Peers were strongly opposed to Mr. Gladstone's scheme. On the other hand, it was more or less known that the "very highest influence" was being exercised to avert a conflict between the two Houses. The Radicals, however, were eager for the fray, and Mr. Bright was ready to agitate for a root-and-branch reform of the Upper Chamber. He did not care for any "childish tinkering about Life Peerages." The Lords must bring themselves into line with the opinion and necessities of the day, or they might "meet with accidents not pleasant for them to think of." Mr. Chamberlain spoke at a great meeting in the Town Hall.



"It is only just," he said, that those who have to discuss the Bill should have full opportunity of judging what is the national will on this question. When, however, they are in full possession of the conclusion to which the great majority of their fellow-countrymen have come, if they should see fit, in contradiction to those conclusions, to try again at this time—and it will be a final attempt—to stem the tide of popular opinion, the people of Birmingham will have to consider, in the next great meeting within these walls, whether an institution which again blocks the way to progress is entitled to their continuous respect.

"It is scarcely likely that we shall sit tamely by and see our efforts frustrated by the obstinacy or bigotry of one hundred or two hundred persons, however highly placed they may be. The majority in the Commons of 114, represents the wishes of 6,000,000 people. The 60 Peers opposed to them in the Lords represent three things. Some of them represent the oppression of Feudal lords in times gone by, when people were expected to be grateful for being ruled by the Aristocracy. In the second place, some of them represent the great wealth acquired by the possession of land in the vicinity of large towns—*e.g.*, Manchester and Birmingham—which land enriched its proprietors without care or labour on their part. And, lastly, they represent, and very imperfectly too in many cases, the brains, the intelligence, and the acquirements of ancestors long since dead, who unfortunately have been unable to transmit to their descendants the talents by which they rose. It was of such men as these that the greatest member of the House of Lords who ever sat in that body, Lord Bacon, related that it was customary to say in his time that they were like potatoes—the best part was underground. One may respect the Peerage very much and have an esteem for certain members of it; but, when it comes to estimating the opinion of one unknown nobleman as equivalent to the opinion of hundreds of thousands of



#### FIRST SCHOOL, THE GROVE, CAMBERWELL

Mr. Chamberlain first went to school in The Grove, Camberwell, not far from his father's house. His teacher was Miss Charlotte Pace.



*HODDER & STOUGHTON.*

FIRST SCHOOL, THE GROVE, CAMBERWELL



his fellow-subjects, it is an estimate impossible for the people to hold while they retain any vestige of self-respect. It is impossible that the House of Lords will not see in the history of the last few months proof that the House of Commons is in accord with the People. It reminds me of an anecdote of a farmer and his barometer. It was somewhat out of order, and it perpetually stood at ‘Set Fair’, though it rained incessantly for three days. But then even the patience of the farmer was exhausted, and he took the barometer and beat it against the steps of his house, and said to it, ‘Now won’t you believe your own eyes?’ All over the country the people have approved Mr. Gladstone’s Irish policy; yet the Peers are waiting, and their Conservative friends profess themselves dissatisfied. In the words of that great Statesman, Mr. Gladstone, after the time has come, and the case is proved, action is still to be deferred, though in this case justice deferred is justice denied. I venture to hope that the effect of this and similar meetings will be that the House of Lords will be advised in time, will take counsel of the most intelligent and most able of the Tory Peers, and avert, for this time at least, the spectacle of a conflict between the Peers and People.”

This was good politics in 1869. It was generally believed at that time, by Conservatives as well as by Liberals, that the House of Lords existed only on sufferance, and that if the trumpet were blown loud enough the garrison must capitulate. The policy of menace has been many times repeated since 1869—by no politician more vigorously than by Mr. Chamberlain—and only of late years has it been realised that the practical difficulties in making a fundamental amendment of the British Constitution are as great as, if not greater than, in that of the United States or the French Republic. When put to the proof, the Radicals discovered in 1884–1885 that their only means of carrying their point was getting up a strong current of public opinion against the Peers. In that instance they happened to fail, so the experiment has

yet to be tried whether—in cases of a direct issue between Peers and People—the former could be compelled to give way to the latter. In 1869, it must be admitted that the Peers had already exercised what their more cautious supporters had hitherto defined as the limit of their Constitutional powers. They had forced the Prime Minister to dissolve Parliament on the very question on which they had disagreed with him; the country had been consulted, and had given its verdict in favour of the Government policy. It was not, therefore, very likely—at an epoch when Liberalism was conscious of growing strength, and Conservatism scarcely concealed its misgivings—that the Peers would persist, on the main issue at least, in their struggle with the Commons. In getting up Indignation Meetings, therefore, and in organising Monster Demonstrations and talking at large about Abolition of the House of Lords, the Radicals were doing useful service to the Gladstone Administration.

The most important epoch in the earlier part of Mr. Chamberlain's public career had begun in 1868, when he was elected Chairman of the National Education League, the active and aggressive body which was to play so prominent a part in the conflict that ended two years later in the establishment of Board Schools, side by side with Voluntary Schools, throughout England and Wales. In its beginnings, the League was almost Undenominational. It was the child of the Birmingham Education Society, the first meetings of which had been attended by the late Archbishop Temple, then Headmaster of Rugby, as well as by ministers of almost every Nonconformist community. At that time, however, Dr. Temple was considered an advanced Liberal, and his close association with some of the more latitudinarian contributors to *Essays and Reviews* had thrown him somewhat out of touch with average sentiment in the Church of England. Still, the main purpose of the Birmingham Education Society was not yet anti-clerical. Its founders, Mr. Chamberlain among them,

desired, in the first place, to call attention to the defective provision for Elementary Education, to raise funds for the payment of the school fees for children whose parents could not or would not afford to find the money, and to agitate for these charges being placed on the Rates. Meantime, the Birmingham Education Society did a good deal of work in the way of whipping-up attendance at the National Schools and paying the fees. From this origin sprang the National Education League, whose objects were formally defined as to provide school accommodation through the Local Authorities, and to institute and maintain schools by means of Local Rates and Government Grants. Such schools were to be managed by the Local Authorities subject to Government inspection. They were to be free, attendance was to be compulsory, and the teaching was to be unsectarian. Moreover, the education was to be "so graduated that the child of the poorest artisan shall have it in his power to fit himself for any position capable of being obtained by a citizen of the United Kingdom."

To this work (we read) the League had set themselves with a serious conviction of its vital importance, and under a sense of personal responsibility and public duty, and to that work they intended to devote themselves until it should be accomplished, and "the reproach and curse of ignorance wiped away from the land." The rotundity of the language may bring a smile in these less earnest days, but the promoters of the League proved their practical sincerity by opening their purses. Ten of the leading Birmingham manufacturers, including Mr. Dixon and Mr. Chamberlain, gave £1000 each, and the organisation was very soon established on what may be called a war footing. At a great Conference held in Birmingham, a speech was delivered by Mr. Chamberlain, in which he showed that the question was one which especially appealed to working-men. Nor does he seem to have considered it necessary to argue that the benefits which



compulsory education would confer on the children would more than counterbalance any hardships inflicted on their parents. He took it for granted that on this text no sermon was required by his fellow-townsmen. Probably he would have followed a different line if he had been addressing a rural audience. Though he was already a vehement advocate of unsectarian teaching, and on many occasions has permitted himself to use very strong expressions about the educational claims of the Church of England, he did not commit the cardinal error of ignoring his opponents' case. The following passage from his speech is instructive:—

“I should be the last to deny or depreciate the enormous sacrifices which have been made by many of the Clergy to establish and maintain schools. But I say that on their own confession their motive has been, not the education of the people as a thing which is good in itself, but the maintenance of the doctrines of the Church of England. I say that, even if they had been a great deal more successful than they have really been, it is the worst kind of Conservatism to say that because a thing is good of its kind it shall not be supplanted by something which is better and more complete.

“If Denominational education is to be extended in England, how can you in justice refuse Denominational education in Ireland (*i.e.*, Roman Catholic education)? And then you will have this glorious anomaly in our splendid Constitutional system; you will have the State spending money on mutually destructive objects; and the patient people will be called upon in one breath to swallow the poison and the antidote, and to pay the bill for both!”

There was no doubt that the Government would so far comply with the views of the League as to make education universal and compulsory. On this point the Liberal Party were practically agreed, nor could any serious opposition be offered except by those extreme Conservatives, neither numerous nor influential, who objected to anything

that would make people "discontented with their station in life." It was understood that, having extended the Franchise, the State must also open the schools. In fact, "we must educate our masters." But it remained to be seen whether Ministers would—from the Radical point of view—be "strong" enough to abolish fees and insist on the teaching being absolutely secular, or, as the phrase ran, unsectarian. On both points the League was urgent, and its leaders omitted no opportunity of placing their opinions before the country and pressing them on the Government. As for "Free Education," that was soon seen to be, for the present at least, quite outside the sphere of practical politics, and, though the League were dissatisfied, they could not reasonably attack Ministers for not adopting a proposal which the House of Commons undoubtedly would have rejected. Nor did the Government propose to establish a uniform system of public elementary schools. Briefly, Mr. Forster's Bill supplemented, without seeking to destroy, the Voluntary system. It had not broken down, but it was inadequate. England and Wales, therefore, were divided into a number of School Districts, every Municipal borough and most parishes being treated as separate Districts, and London being made a unit. Where the teaching system already in existence was "sufficient, efficient, and suitable" (by which it was meant that no conscientious objection could be taken to the character of the religious instruction), no interference was contemplated. But in localities where the Voluntary school did not satisfy this triple standard the contemplated Act would be brought into force. The expense was to be divided, in approximately equal proportions, between a local Rate, a Parliamentary Grant, and Fees paid by parents. The only concession made under this head to the Radical demands was that in very poor districts the Fees might be remitted when the parents were known to be in indigent circumstances. The Authority in each district to carry out the Act was to be a School Board

elected by the ratepayers, which would be empowered either to build and maintain new schools, or assist old ones in which a proper Conscience Clause was observed. Finally, the School Board was required to insist on the attendance of all children within school age.

Education, then, was to be universal and compulsory; in case of necessity, it might even be free. So far the League had little to complain of. While the leaders did not disguise their disappointment at the retention of Fees, they were not prepared (as Mr. Chamberlain announced, at a meeting held in the Birmingham Town Hall in March) to declare war on Ministers—or even on Mr. Forster individually. “I have great faith,” he said, “in the fairness of the Ministry.” By this, probably, he meant that judicious pressure applied to Mr. Gladstone might result in further concession. Meantime, there could be no harm in denouncing the imperfections of the Bill. “The League,” he said, “would far rather the whole Measure were postponed than that half-measures should be thrust upon them, which would satisfy no Party, but delay the proper solution of the matter, perhaps, for another decade.”

It was, therefore, with bitter disappointment that the League received Mr. Forster’s authoritative announcement in Parliament, that the Government would not forbid Religious Teaching in the Board Schools. That, he said, would have meant excluding the Bible from Education—a proposal which the overwhelming majority of Englishmen, not to mention Englishwomen, would not tolerate or dream of tolerating. On the other hand, it was provided that no child should be excluded from the full advantages of school because he attended, or abstained from attending, any Sunday School or place of Religious Worship; or should be compelled to learn any Catechism or Religious formulary; or be required to be present at any lesson, instruction, or observance, to which his parents had, on Religious grounds, made objection. “Surely,” exclaimed

Mr. Forster, "the time will come when we shall find out how we can better agree on these matters, when men will find that in the main questions of Religion they agree, and can teach them to their children. Shall we cut off from the future all hopes of such agreement, and may not all those questions which regulate our own conduct in life, and animate our hopes for the future after death, which form for us our standard of Right and Wrong—shall we say that these are wholly to be excluded from our schools? . . . I confess I have still in my veins the blood of my Puritan forefathers, and I wonder to hear descendants of the Puritans now talk of Religion as if it were the property of any class or condition of men. . . . The English people cling to the Bible, and no Measure will be more unpopular than one which declares by Act of Parliament that the Bible shall be excluded from the schools. . . . What do the League want? Wherever the majority are of their views, they can carry them!"

Mr. Forster's words were intended and taken as a direct reply to the Birmingham Radicals. It is equally clear that he was faithfully interpreting the dominant sense of the country, though defying a vigorous and determined Party. Where the advocates of Secular Education were not in a majority—*i.e.* in nine districts out of ten—all children would have to attend instruction that might be disliked by the parents of some. The magnitude of the grievance might be a matter of opinion, but, such as it was, it was not met by Mr. Forster, and the League never forgave him. Their claim was expressed with sufficient clearness by Mr. Winterbotham in his reply. His language, though strong, was moderate by comparison with the indignant demonstrations of some of the Nonconformist spokesmen. The Bill, he said, would be a curse rather than a blessing—it was an ill-omened messenger of strife and bitterness. He did not desire the downfall of the Church of England. "Though it has been a cruel stepmother to some of us, it is a venerable institution; it

has done, and is doing, good work." But what the Radicals demanded was such a system of purely Secular instruction as was provided in the National Schools in Ireland. Religion should be left entirely to the Pastor, the Home, and the Sunday School.

The storm was so violent that further concessions were subsequently announced by the Prime Minister. As the Conscience Clause proposed by Mr. Forster was not considered adequate protection, the Religious should be distinctly separated from the Secular instruction, and a time-table should be instituted to prevent the two subjects from overlapping. The Cowper-Temple Clause was accepted in Committee, and by this compromise (which was intended to bring peace) every catechism and formulary distinctive of any Denomination was expressly excluded from any school receiving aid from the Rates; the Board schools and the Voluntary schools were placed in two separate classes, and the latter were deprived of any aid from the Rates, though, to compensate them partially for this loss, the proportion which they might receive from the Treasury was raised from one-third to one-half of the total expenditure. Although any School Board was given the right to exclude every form of religious teaching, it was seen that the general rule would be—and in fact it was—that the master would read the Bible and expound it, though without reference to any catechism or creed.

Thus was founded what Lord Salisbury once scoffingly called the School Board Religion. The proposal was equally disliked by extreme men on both sides, but at the moment the fiercer explosion of wrath came from the Nonconformists. They had been thrown overboard, said Mr. Richard, whose hostile Amendment was rejected by 421 votes against 60. A memorable scene took place, when Mr. Miall threatened Ministers with the withdrawal of Nonconformist support. Mr. Gladstone suddenly flamed into wrath: "I hope that my honourable friend," he said, "will not extend that support to the Government

one hour longer than he deems it consistent with his sense of duty and right. For God's sake, sir, let him withdraw it the moment he thinks it better for the cause he has at heart that he should do so!" Mr. Miall, a highly respected but not very impressive person, was crushed for the time. In the House of Commons, Ministers had things their own way; but the defiance thrown out to the League was bitterly resented.

Two years later Mr. Chamberlain, speaking at Manchester, complained that for years the Nonconformists had served the Liberal Party as hewers of wood and drawers of water. They had been patient under contemptuous toleration which was very hard to bear. They had accepted every act of justice as a favour, and every instalment of rights as a singular and almost unmerited grace. They had waited for the convenience and the pleasure of the Liberal Party. "But now, when we might fairly expect an accelerated speed, when we might justly demand a larger share of attention and relief, suddenly the great Liberal Party falters and the Liberal Leaders hesitate; under the guidance of a man who boasts his Puritan ancestors while he is indifferent to their principles and to their cause, we see ourselves drifting back into the darkness, when we thought we were emerging into the light of perfect day. Concessions which are made to threats of Irish disaffection, which are wrung from the Government by the terrors of a priesthood which takes its inspiration from a foreign source, are curtly refused to Nonconformist loyalty. While Conservative support is angled for, and clerical opposition is bribed into silence with a great price, we are told to take our support elsewhere by the Leader of a Ministry that we contributed mainly to bring into power."

It would not be consistent, he supposed, with "the pacific habits" of Nonconformists, to break Mr. Forster's windows or pull down any Park railings—though these measures had been referred to as "marvellous stimulants

to modern Statesmanship." No, but the Nonconformists must withdraw their support at elections from Liberals "until they had learned the Liberal alphabet and could spell the first words of the Liberal creed. The parson and the publican had joined hands; Roman Catholics and Churchmen had embraced; the lion lay down with the lamb, to secure from the School Boards support for Denominational education."

On the next day (24th January 1872), Mr. Chamberlain summed up succinctly what the League would be content with—and they would not accept less. The representatives of the ratepayer must have absolute control of all national funds applied to Secular Education; all Grants for this purpose made to Denominational bodies must be withdrawn; Religious Teaching should be relegated to religious bodies, each at its own time and in its own buildings; but if Board Schools were used for such a purpose all Denominations must be treated alike; and similar concessions must be made with regard to the Training Colleges. Nonconformists would not submit to toleration—they insisted on equality.

Though Mr. Chamberlain had opposed Mr. Forster's Bill before it became law, and denounced it afterwards, he took an active part in administering it. He was one of the six Radical members of the first Birmingham School Board, the others being Mr. George Dixon (President of the League), Mr. R. W. Dale, Mr. J. S. Wright, Mr. George Dawson, and Mr. Charles Vince. This minority of "stalwart" Radicals waged unrelenting warfare against the policy of the majority, and, it would seem, against the spirit, if not against the letter, of the Act. After three years' incessant struggle, Mr. Dixon's and Mr. Chamberlain's group were reinforced by the election of Mr. Jesse Collings and Miss Sturge. On the School Board, as on the Town Council, the Progressive party in Birmingham were now installed in power, and took every possible advantage of their position to promote the cause for which

they were agitating on every platform where they could get a hearing.

Locally, their success was beyond question, but it may be doubted whether the Nonconformists were well advised in organising a campaign of vengeance against a Liberal Government which had made them the utmost concessions that the country was ready to sanction. It is true that in 1874 they punished Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Forster for "betraying" the cause of Religious Equality; but the only result was that Mr. Disraeli came into office, and held it until 1880, and that Mr. Gladstone never, in any of his three future Administrations, found an opportunity of making the reparation which they considered their due, and which he would, perhaps, have conceded, if his lease of power had been extended in 1874. It is true that Mr. Forster would have resisted any interference with the settlement of 1870, and that Mr. Gladstone had apparently nailed his colours to the mast. But Mr. Forster might be thrown over, and Mr. Gladstone would easily have found an honourable excuse for a practical surrender. At this time (1869-1873) the Nonconformists made the mistake, Mr. Chamberlain among them, of driving Mr. Gladstone too hard. On questions of policy and expediency he was pliable—even on matters of principle his enemies said that he was, at least, open to argument—but when his personal authority had been challenged there is no recorded instance of his having given way. Mr. Chamberlain, as we shall see, already had some appreciation of this quality in the great popular Statesman. In his later electioneering speeches, when the general issue between the Liberals and Conservatives was laid before the country, he refused to take up an attitude of definite hostility towards the Liberals, or even towards official Liberalism; but till nearly the end of Mr. Gladstone's First Administration he had been a prime leader in organised rebellion. The malcontents did not, indeed, wish to depose Mr. Gladstone, but they did mean



either to convince or coerce him into shedding his Whig associations, and coming before the country as a Radical pure and simple. How far they succeeded, and wherein they failed, will be seen hereafter.

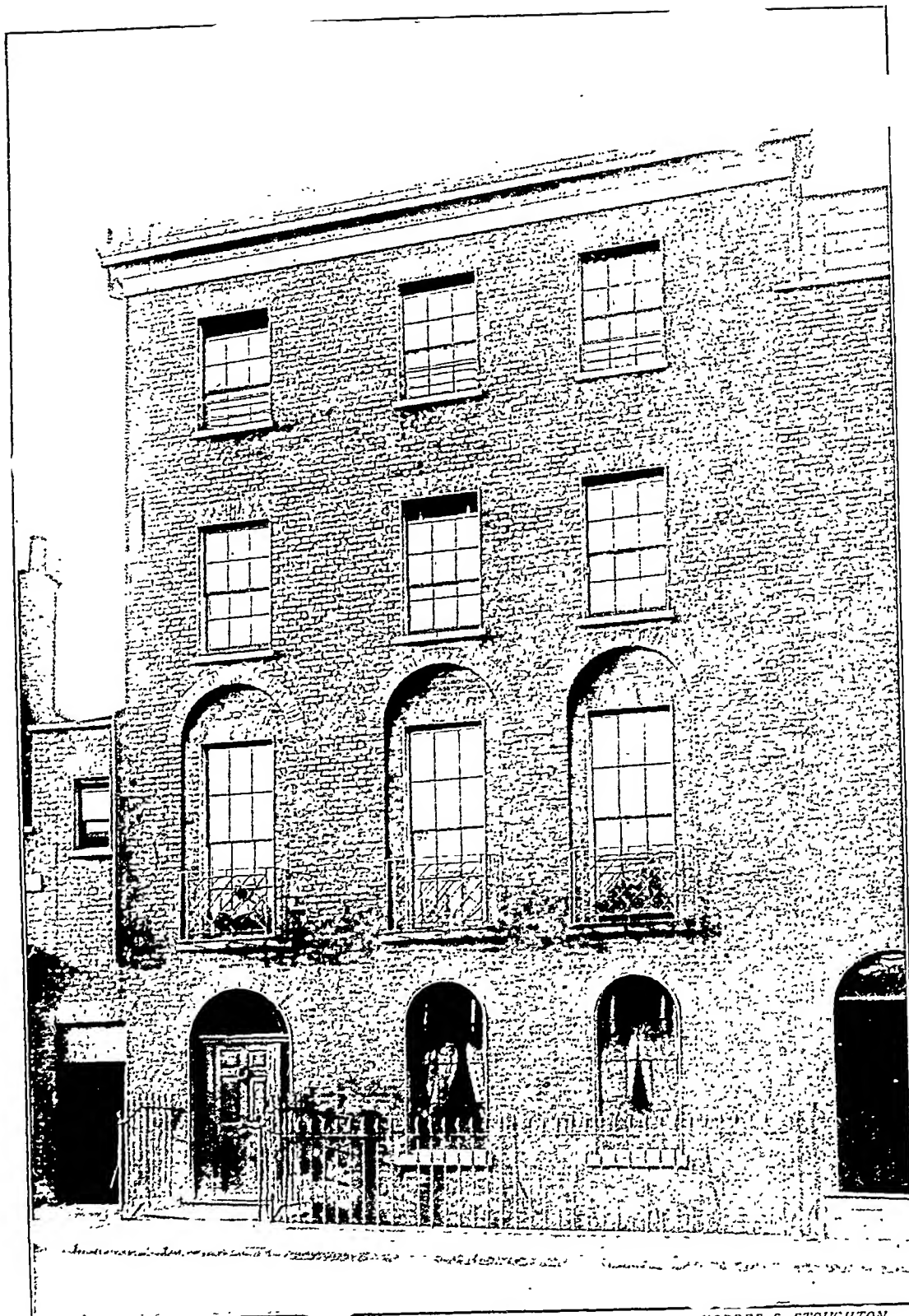
Meantime, Mr. Chamberlain, though his eye had from the first been directed to the House of Commons, devoted himself, with singular prudence, to consolidating his local influence. His work on the Birmingham School Board in association with Mr. George Dixon, his connection with Mr. Schnadhorst in creating and working the "Caucus," his platform speeches in the Midlands, and occasionally in Scotland and other districts remote from the Midland Capital—all this was polemical and controversial. If it made friends and admirers, it also made enemies and detractors. He was, it is true, becoming a well-known man outside his own neighbourhood, but it is hardly too much to say that he was, at this time, very generally hated—by moderate Liberals as well as by old-fashioned Conservatives. If he had relied simply on his political record, his entry into Parliament might have been delayed, and even when he had been returned his claims to Office might not have been so promptly recognised as they were.

Like a careful strategist, Mr. Chamberlain, therefore, strengthened himself at the base, and throughout his career has kept his communications unassailable. No matter how widely his popularity in Parliament, or in the country at large, has fluctuated, he has always found Birmingham true to him, and he has always been true to Birmingham. Yet from the first the Conservatives in that city have been a strong and active body, and the sharpest attacks upon him, those that were not merely personal, have emanated from his fellow-townsmen. The foundations of his enduring local power were laid, not by his success in political contests, but by his excellent work as a Municipal administrator. His connection with the locality was already established by the ever-extending



#### SECOND SCHOOL, 36 CANONBURY SQUARE

In 1845 the Chamberlains removed to 25 Highbury Place, in the North London suburb of Highbury. The future Statesman was placed in the school conducted by the Rev. Arthur Johnson at 36 Canonbury Square. In 1850 he entered University Collège School.



SECOND SCHOOL, 36 CANONBURY SQUARE



ramifications of a highly prosperous business; it may have been strengthened, perhaps, by his marriage, in 1869, to his second wife, Miss Florence Kenrick, a cousin of the lady who had died in 1867. His activity on the School Board, his frequent appearances on the platform, his growing reputation as a speaker among a population whom Mr. Bright had taught to appreciate good oratory, and the munificent gifts of himself and his nearest associates to objects of general utility, had marked him out for civic office. In 1871 he was elected Mayor, and the honour was repeated in 1874 and 1875. So dominant had his influence become, that on the last occasion it was good-humouredly complained by an opponent, that he was "not only Mayor but Town Council also." Birmingham had long been a rapidly increasing city—indeed it had somewhat outgrown its methods of Self-Government. Mr. Chamberlain, in close co-operation with Mr. Jesse Collings, inaugurated, and carried out, on a small scale, what has been described as "a policy of State Socialism."

"Fifty years ago," he has said in a review of his own work, "the population of the town was 180,000, or about 40 per cent of what it is now. The rateable value was less than one-third of what it is at present. In those days, there were, with the exception of the Town Hall and Market Hall, no public edifices of any magnitude or importance. There were no Parks, there were no Free Libraries, there were no Baths; there was no Art Gallery or Art Museum; there were no Board Schools; there was no School of Art, no Midland Institute, no Mason College; there was no Corporation Street. The great area which is covered by that thoroughfare, and the streets depending upon it, was one of the worst districts in the town, both socially and considered from a sanitary point of view. In fact, at the period of which I am speaking, the era of street improvements had not begun. The streets themselves were badly paved; they were imperfectly lighted, they were only partially drained. The foot-walks were worse

than the streets. You had to proceed either in several inches of mud, or in favoured localities you might go upon cobble-stones, on which it was a penance to walk. The gas and the water belonged to private monopolies. Gas was supplied at an average rate of about 5s. per 1000 cubic feet. The water was supplied by the Company on three days in the week; on other days you must either go without, or you must take advantage of the perambulating carts which went round the town, and which supplied water from polluted wells at 10s. the thousand gallons. You will not be surprised, under these circumstances, to know that, in 1848, the annual mortality of Birmingham was thirty in the thousand; now it is twenty in the thousand. The only wonder is that it was not much greater; because we read of whole streets from which typhus and scarlet fever, and diphtheria and diarrhœa in its worst forms, were never absent. We read of thousands of courts which were not paved, which were not drained, which were covered with pools of stagnant filth, and in which the ash-pits and the middens were in a state of indescribable nastiness. The sewerage of the town was very partial; and, in fact, to sum up the description, it may truly be said that, when this Society was born, Birmingham, although it was no worse than any of the other great cities of the United Kingdom, was a town in which scarcely anything had been done, either for the instruction, or for the health, or for the recreation, or for the comfort, or for the convenience, of the artisan population."

Early in his first year's tenure of the civic Chair, Mr. Chamberlain admitted—or boasted rather—that he was inclined to "magnify his office." He wished to increase the duties and responsibilities of the Local Authority - which ought to be "a local Parliament, supreme in its special jurisdiction." In embarking upon the schemes of Municipal Reform which he was about to urge on his colleagues, he was aware that the patronage and influence of the Council would be enormously increased. Already

he had in mind the extension of Local Self-Government, not merely as an abstract doctrine, but as an item in a practical programme that would be promoted by the example of his own Town Council. He began with a scheme for buying up the two Companies which were supplying Birmingham with Gas, and the outlay involved no less a sum than £2,000,000 sterling. We should not be startled by these figures nowadays, but a generation ago it was, what Mr. Chamberlain called it, "a momentous proposition." There was no great risk in the undertaking (as the result showed), and the Council agreed to the Mayor's plan by 54 votes against 2. There was more difference of opinion at the ratepayers' meeting which was called to ratify or repudiate the action of the Corporation. Asked whether he would himself give the price which the Corporation had been asked to pay, Mr. Chamberlain replied that if that body would conclude the purchase, and farm the business out to him, he would pay them £20,000 a year for the privilege, and at the end of fourteen years he would realise a snug little fortune of £180,000 or £200,000. In the end, the proposal was approved by a majority of nearly three to one. Within a few years two reductions had been made in the charge to consumers, and a yearly profit had been gained in addition, which worked out between £40,000 and £50,000 a year.

The municipalisation of the Gas business was followed by the acquisition of the Water Supply. A considerable part of the population had to rely on wells, and many of these were so unsanitary that the Council would soon have to close them. This would mean extra profit to the Companies. Why not buy them out before the action of the Corporation should increase the value of their property? The Companies, of course, opened their mouths wide, and, to compel them to sell at a reasonable price, it was necessary to get a Bill through Parliament. Mr. Chamberlain's view was that they should not be allowed to reckon, in the price to be given, such future profits as might be due to



the increase of the town. These, he argued, belonged to the ratepayers. For the Companies to claim them was to demand "unearned increment." The Corporation, he said, did not wish to make a profit, only to increase the comfort and promote the health of the town. When the Bill passed, and the authorities got to work, it was soon found that an abundant supply of good water could be provided (though it has since had to be supplemented from Wales), and that the charge could be reduced. At first some discontent was caused by closing the old wells, but the benefits of the scheme were generally recognised, and the example of Birmingham was frequently quoted by Progressive spirits in other ambitious Municipalities.

A still bolder adventure was the clearance of the slum district in the very centre of the town, and the construction of what is now Corporation Street on the site. To carry out this public improvement, a sum of £1,600,000 must be raised, and, before the Statutory powers had been obtained, no public money was available for the purchase of land that might come into the market. For this purpose, Mr. Chamberlain advanced £10,000, and his example was followed by a number of his fellow-citizens. In due course the Corporation was enabled to take advantage of Cross's Act, and the whole area was laid out, and let on building leases that will fall in about the middle of the present century, when the city of Birmingham will become the possessor of a highly valuable property.

This, undoubtedly, was good business, but, in this undertaking Mr. Chamberlain and his associates, not for the first time, manifested traces of that innovating philanthropy which is always liable to be suspected as "dangerous" and "savouring of Socialism." Yet there was nothing exceptionable in any of the sentiments which he expressed. In proposing to clear away the rookeries, he dwelt on the unwholesome condition of the area, and the misery of the inhabitants:—

"We want to make these people healthier and better;

I want to make them happier also. Let us consider for a moment the forlorn and desolate lives the best of these people must live, in courts like those described. It made my heart bleed when I heard the descriptions, of Mr. White and others, of the dreariness—the intense dreariness—and the lack of everything which would add interest or pleasure to the life which obtains among that class. . . . I know for a fact that there are people there almost as ignorant of what is going on around them as if they lived in a lonely and savage island. . . . Some would even lose themselves in New Street. There are people who do not know that there is an existence on the other side of the Town Hall; people who are as ignorant of all that goes to make the pleasure, the interest, the activity, and the merit of our lives, as if they were savages in Ceylon, instead of being Englishmen and Englishwomen in the Nineteenth Century, enjoying all the blessings of civilisation.”

Brought up in those dreary and filthy surroundings, surrounded by noxious influences of every kind, what was likely to be their conduct? It was said that the position of these people was their own fault! “Yes, it is legally their fault” (Mr. Chamberlain went on), “and when they steal we send them to gaol, and when they commit murder we hang them. But if the members of this Council had been placed under similar conditions—if from infancy we had grown up in the same way—does any one of us believe that we would have run no risk of the gaoler or the hangman? For my own part, I have not sufficient confidence in my own inherent goodness to believe that anything can make headway against such frightful conditions as I have described. The fact is, that it is no more the fault of these people that they are vicious and intemperate, than that they are stunted, deformed, debilitated, and diseased. The one is due to the physical atmosphere—the moral atmosphere as necessarily and as surely produces the other.”

Commonplaces in 1903! But thirty, even twenty,

years ago, when the Poor Law was held to cover the State's duty to the People, they were dreaded and denounced by conscientious and kindly persons who honestly believed that they were acting for the best when they resisted every proposal that could be regarded as "unsettling." The Birmingham Town Council were less timid. It was resolved to use the powers conferred by Cross's Act (philanthropically stretched, with the approval of the author, beyond its original scope), and made themselves the proprietors of forty acres of freehold land within the city. There is, however, one objection to improvements of this kind, which is apt to be overlooked by those who promote them. The site is cleared: poverty and vice are banished from the scene. But what becomes of the dispossessed persons? They are not reformed; for they are not provided for. They simply migrate to the nearest slum, and, if possible, intensify the congestion and increase the sum of local wretchedness.

Moreover, it is undoubtedly true that, while Chancellors of the Exchequer have been labouring year by year to reduce the collective liability of the nation, the civic authorities have been still more rapidly increasing the local debts. In some instances they have even embarked on purely speculative undertakings, and entered into competition with private firms and commercial companies. This is clearly an unwarrantable method of employing money raised by a compulsory levy, even when it has been sanctioned by a strong majority of the ratepayers' representatives—as, in most cases, it has been. It is not always easy to draw the line between what a Municipality should attempt, and what it should abstain from. Mr. Chamberlain—who was regarded at one time as a daring innovator—afterwards laid down the rule that Municipal activity should be limited to those things which the community can do better than the private individual. The main drainage and sewerage of a town can only be properly undertaken by representatives of the

whole town: it cannot safely be left to individual citizens; whenever there is need of concerted action, or where a monopoly of any kind has been set up, Municipal control should be invoked.

The authors of the Municipal Reform Act of 1835—Mr. Chamberlain wrote in *The New Review* in 1894—did not realise the future development of the system they had initiated. All they intended was to reorganise the Municipal administration of finance, judicature, and police. The powers of the Corporation were not greatly enlarged—what was done was to establish a popular Constituency, and to make the Administration strictly responsible to it. The additional powers which had since been acquired by Local Authorities were conferred by degrees, so that Parliament might relieve itself of tasks too multifarious for its control by remitting local matters more and more to local administrators.

A modern Corporation is expected to control police and maintain public order; to supervise, if not to undertake, the sewerage, drainage, and lighting of the town; to be responsible for precautions against fire and for sanitary inspection; to regulate the condition of the streets, and, perhaps, to construct docks, wharfs, and bridges; to provide hospitals for infectious diseases, and lunatic asylums; it may establish public baths and wash-houses, lay out parks and recreation grounds, and found libraries, museums, and picture galleries. It is appointed to watch over the administration of certain Acts of Parliament, and to assist in the administration of charities, and, as we have seen, it may be empowered to acquire certain monopolies for public purposes, such as the supply of gas, electricity, and water, and the management of tramways. The complexity of our system of Local Government has been greatly increased by the erection of County Councils, District Councils, and also by the Education Acts of 1902 and 1903, which, by the abolition of School Boards, have

considerably added to the responsibilities of the County Councils and the County Borough Councils.

When Mr. Chamberlain was a local administrator in Birmingham (he did not quite sever his connection with the Town Council till 1880), and even when he commented on Local Government in the Magazine article just summarised, the duties of a Municipal politician were comparatively light and simple, and it is largely to the example of Birmingham and Mr. Chamberlain's personal initiative that the movement of recent years owes its origin. Though he did not discover the idea—it is as old as the British Constitution—undoubtedly he gave a powerful impetus to its development.

Yet he was not unaware of certain dangers that may attend the exercise of almost undefined powers by a body not answerable to the general opinion of the whole country. He has been strongly opposed to what he considers the exorbitant claims of the Progressives in the London County Council, and in 1894 he threw out hints that its power should be clipped by creating a number of Metropolitan Boroughs and assigning to each some of the functions then vested in the central body. Quite as strongly as the most old-fashioned Conservative, he disliked the idea of a London Council attaining such powers as would make it a sort of rival to the Imperial Parliament. As he said, success in Local Government depends upon effective decentralisation, and there can be no decentralisation when a single body has to look after the affairs of 5,000,000 persons—the population of an entire State.

Mr. Chamberlain has always been a careful student of Republican Institutions; in his younger days, perhaps, as a somewhat ardent admirer; afterwards, when he had been brought into closer personal contact, as a favourable but discriminating observer. What he saw with his own eyes on his visits to America convinced him that, if we are to avoid the corruption which, though far from universal, is by no means rare in the United States, we must not allow

Municipal posts to be made the rewards of political service, and must especially beware of the system under which the tenure of administrative officials is terminated by the fall of the Party that gave them their appointments. The average expenditure on Local Government in the United States was, he calculated, four or five times as heavy as in the United Kingdom. Having gained their places by corruption, or something very like it, and knowing that their salaries will come to an end with the next turn in the Party machine, the officials, naturally, make hay while the sun shines. That is to say, they recoup themselves by extortion for what they have spent on bribery. If we are to have honest and efficient administration, public officers must be paid reasonable salaries, and be guaranteed in their positions so long as they discharge the duties efficiently.

The limitations on Local Government which were to be recommended to Mr. Chamberlain's mind by subsequent and wider experience had not, perhaps, been very scrupulously observed by the Town Council of Birmingham, when he was its Mayor and, as people said, its Dictator. But the movement was then young and its leaders—who thought that the eye of the whole country was upon them—were, naturally, enthusiasts. The Birmingham Progressives did seek to make the Council a local Parliament; did treat Statutory restrictions as obstacles to be broken down or circumvented; and, to a certain extent, though in no very gross manner, they did give appointments to men who had helped them in Municipal contests. On the other hand, they did not confine their patronage to their partisans, nor was it ever charged against them that they parted with a good servant because he was not "sound" in politics. Looked at from a distance, and without political favour or prejudice, the administration of public affairs at Birmingham was during these years—as it has been since—a wonderful example of civic enterprise and efficiency. Nor can it be denied that, though others worked quite as hard, the impetus and initiative were, in the main,

supplied by the Mayor. He startled a good many steady-going citizens by his bold schemes, but they had to admit, when the various proposals had been got fairly into working order, that he never led the Corporation into making a bad bargain, and that every benefit which he had promised was in due course realised. The result was that, when he laid down office at the end of his third year, he was, if not personally the most popular, undoubtedly the most influential, citizen of Birmingham.

Nothing annoys him less—though he is unduly sensitive to personal attacks—than the taunt that he has a “Mayoral mind.” He knows very well that those three years of Municipal office, followed as they have been by nearly thirty years of political devotion to the town and neighbourhood, have given him a position distinct from that of any other Statesman—almost as powerful as that of a great territorial magnate in the days before the Reform Act. The Constituencies around Birmingham are not Mr. Chamberlain’s pocket-boroughs, nor are the electors in that area men who will be driven. But they can be led by a man whom they trust and admire. If there is equal intelligence in the Metropolitan Divisions, and equal shrewdness in the Scottish and North of England Constituencies, there is more political enthusiasm in the Midlands than in any part of Great Britain. The basis of Mr. Chamberlain’s ascendancy was, as we have seen, established in the days when he was looking after the gas and water and laying out the new streets of Birmingham. “I will confess to you,” he said in 1880, “that I am so parochially minded that I look with greater satisfaction to our annexation of the gas and water, to our scientific frontier in the Improvement Area, than I do to the result of that Imperial policy which has given us Cyprus and the Transvaal; and I am prouder of having been engaged with you in warring against ignorance, and disease, and crime, in Birmingham, than if I had been author of the Zulu War, or had instigated the invasion of Afghanistan.”

## CHAPTER II

### FROM FREE LANCE TO MINISTER

Though Mr. Chamberlain has laid down that an energetic Mayor has little time for other duties, he found plenty of leisure during his term of office for political agitation. His bitter resentment of the treatment of the Nonconformists in the Education Act of 1870 has already been described, and he was known chiefly for his uncompromising hostility to official Liberalism. In other respects also, he represented the extreme section of the Radical party. In theory he was, no doubt, a Republican—as in those days most of the Advanced Radicals were. His views were expressed with sufficient candour at the end of 1872, when he was proposing the Queen's health at a dinner in Birmingham:—

“ I have been taxed with professing Republicanism. I hold, and very few intelligent men do not now hold, that the best form of Government for a free and enlightened people is that of a Republic, and that is a form of Government to which the nations of Europe are surely and not very slowly tending. But, at the same time, I am not at all prepared to enter into an agitation in order to upset the existing state of things, to destroy Monarchy, and to change the name of the titular Ruler of this country. I do not consider that name a matter of the slightest importance. What is of real importance is the spread of a real Republican spirit among the people. The idea, to my mind, that underlies Republicanism is this: that in all cases merit should have a fair chance, that it should not be



handicapped in the race by any accident of birth or privilege; that all men should have equal rights before the Law, equal chances of serving their country." In honouring the toast which he proposed, the company would be honouring the popular authority, the popular will, and the supremacy of Law and Order represented by the Head of the State, and they were also honouring the personal virtues of the distinguished Lady who then occupied the Throne, and had endeared herself to the hearts of her People. Never, he said, either in public or private, had he advocated Republicanism for this country. "We may be tending in that direction, but I hold the time has not yet arrived, if it ever does arrive, and I hold also that Radicals and Liberals have quite enough practical reforms to strive after, without wasting their time on what seems to me a very remote speculation."

What this amounts to is that in the abstract the speaker would have preferred a Republican system to a Monarchy—a sentiment that a courtier might avow to a King. But it must be admitted that Mr. Chamberlain had lent some colour to the imputation of Republican sentiment. At an Electoral Reform Congress, held the previous month in London, he had been described as the Delegate from a Birmingham Republican Club, as well as from the Birmingham Liberal Association and the Central Nonconformist Association. But his attendance, as he afterwards explained, had been on behalf of the Liberal Association: he had not been a member of the Republican Club, and the proposal that he should appear as its Delegate had been made without his knowledge. A still earlier incident, however, has often been brought up against him. On the fall of the Third Empire, he publicly congratulated the French Republicans on having got rid of a system "founded on murder and continued in fraud," which had "perished in corruption." Yet the sting of this declaration was, at least, modified by the addition that there was "really no practical difference between a



JOSEPH CHAMBERLAIN in 1873

This portrait shows Mr. Chamberlain as he appeared in the year before his first mayoralty, and three years before he entered the House of Commons. His age at the time was thirty-seven.



*London Stereoscopic Company.*

JOSEPH CHAMBERLAIN IN 1873



free Constitutional Monarchy, such as ours, and a free Republic. Nevertheless, it was an ill-advised utterance, for the methods of the Commune were far more cruel, and hardly more honest, than those by which the usurping regime of Napoleon III had been established and maintained. Many crimes in history have been more or less whitewashed, but a plausible vindication of the French Commune has yet to be written. To ordinary Englishmen the name was *anathema*, and still is. But at this time, and for some years afterwards, Mr. Chamberlain, as youthful in mind as in appearance, delighted in shocking the sentiment of average men, and sometimes seems to have deliberately set himself to make their flesh creep. In 1874, again, he almost claimed the name of Communist, though he admitted that events in Paris had lent it an ugly connotation. But the leaders of the Commune, he declared at a civic festivity, had fought for the same principles of Self-Government as themselves.

It was not surprising, therefore, that some misgivings should be expressed when it became his duty, in that year, as Mayor of Birmingham, to give an official welcome to the Prince of Wales, who was visiting the town to open the new Municipal buildings. How would Mr. Chamberlain square what were supposed to be his Republican principles with paying loyal respect to the Heir to the Throne? The theme was tempting to the comic journals; but when the ceremony was over it was generally admitted that the Mayor had discharged his task with grace and tact. He even expressed the opinion that the Royal visit would "draw closer the ties between the Throne and the People," and increase the popularity of the members of the Royal House—a popularity which was based quite as much on their hearty sympathy and frank appreciation of the wishes of the nation as on their high position and exalted rank.

It will be seen, then, though Mr. Chamberlain shared the prevailing views of the Radicals of that time—that the Church of England, the House of Lords, and the Mor

archy, were alike doomed institutions—his chief purpose was to promote such social reforms as he believed would increase the comfort and happiness of the people. His practical creed was expounded (in a series of articles in the *Fortnightly Review*), and summed up as Free Labour, Free Land, Free Church, and Free Schools. He believed that the artisans, enfranchised in 1867, would demand, and be right in demanding, a greater share in the rewards of industry, something more than bare wages; that the Land Laws must be so modified, by the abolition of the rules as to primogeniture and entail, that small properties should be made easy and cheap in transfer, while the cultivator should have his property recognised in “unexhausted improvements;” that the Church should be disestablished; that Education, having been made compulsory, should be given without any kind of payment from the parents of those who received it. If the Liberals would unite on this programme, they would satisfy the “just expectations” of Labour, and conciliate the Nonconformists, who had been “driven into rebellion.” On any other terms, he believed, the Liberals would stand no chance of success at the coming General Election.

He acted on his opinions. The General Election was held in January 1874, and he was invited to stand at Sheffield as an Advanced Liberal against Mr. Roebuck, a veteran Liberal who had not quite kept up even with the Party Leaders whom Mr. Chamberlain regarded as laggards. The experiment was not encouraging. He was beaten by a thousand votes, though not convinced of error. Indeed, the result of the General Election, when Mr. Disraeli took office with a majority of fifty-two, was a strong argument that the official Liberal Programme had been insufficient. In the autumn Mr. Chamberlain developed and strengthened his contention in another article (*Fortnightly Review*, October), called “The Next Page of the Liberal Programme,” which gave deep umbrage to the Whigs, while it afforded the

exulting Tories a convenient illustration of the dangerous measures which would be the logical result of Liberal principles. Denounced as he was on every Conservative platform, Mr. Chamberlain became almost a favourite with his adversaries: his speeches and his articles provided very useful missiles for pelting Mr. Gladstone.

In 1874, Mr. Chamberlain retired from business with an ample fortune, and in the following year he suffered the misfortune of losing his second wife. He was not, however, a man either to live in opulent idleness or brood over a personal sorrow. He did, indeed, tender his resignation of the office of Mayor, as he would not be able to discharge the social duties of the post, but the offer was not accepted by the Corporation, who undertook to relieve him of the ceremonial functions if he would consent to carry on "the Parliamentary business to which the Borough stood committed."

After a brief absence in the South of France Mr. Chamberlain returned to Birmingham, and threw himself, with increased energy, into politics. From that time, almost to the present, he has lived in an incessant whirl of controversy, attacking the policy of others, and defending his own, giving hard knocks and getting them back, but never wearied or worried with the perpetual strife, and always ready to renew the combat. It must have been almost a disappointment to him that he should be returned for the first time to the House of Commons without a contest. On the retirement of his friend and leader on the National Education League, Mr. George Dixon, in June 1876, he was elected to the vacant seat in Birmingham without opposition, having resigned the Mayoralty and Chairmanship of the School Board. But his connection with civic administration was not terminated till 1880 (when he took office in Mr. Gladstone's Administration). It was something of a wrench, he admitted, to withdraw from the position of Chief Magistrate in his adopted town. "Local Government, he said in



his first address to his constituents, "is increasing in importance, and Imperial is diminishing." Nor was that a time, in his opinion, when following the fortunes of the Liberal Party in Parliament was likely to bring opportunities of personal distinction. His animosity to the Church of England as an established institution was unabated, though he had never questioned its religious value or the personal worth of those who preached its doctrines. But union between Church and State meant separation between Church and People. One reason why workingmen did not go to Church was that they saw in it an opponent of the political reforms which they desired. As for the practical programme which he would advocate, it included better representation of the people, promotion of Temperance, and removal of the great causes of social discord and the obstacles to political progress. England was said to be the Paradise of the rich; let it not become the Purgatory of the poor! But these reforms, fundamental as they were, must only be pursued by Constitutional methods. While he regretted that personal bitterness should be mixed up in political controversy, no fear of obloquy would cause him to abate his convictions, or moderate the expression of his views. He went to Parliament, not as a representative of Middle-class Liberalism; he claimed to speak in behalf of the workingmen who represented four-fifths of this Constituency.

This demonstration of Radicalism had a special meaning with reference to the condition of the Liberal Party in the House of Commons. Disgusted by his failure at the General Election in 1874, and apprehensive of failing strength, Mr. Gladstone in 1875 had announced, in what appeared to be final language, his withdrawal from the Party Leadership. For the succession to his place, at least in the House of Commons, the only serious candidates were Lord Hartington and Mr. Forster. Though the former was by his family connections associated with Whig rather than Radical opinions, he was a compara-

tively young man, and generally believed to cherish the highest ambition. It was, therefore, assumed and hoped that he would prove fairly malleable, and "move with the times," whilst his reputation for cautiousness would be useful as tending to reassure timid politicians. Mr. Forster, on the other hand, though in some respects far more advanced in views, was essentially a stubborn man, who could neither be cajoled nor coerced into going beyond the limits he had marked out for himself. Moreover, he had been the Minister responsible for the Education Act, and it was due to his personal insistence that Mr. Gladstone's Cabinet accepted and carried the religious compromise which had given mortal offence to the National Education League. The selection of Lord Hartington in Mr. Gladstone's place, therefore, was largely due to Nonconformist influence, and, in part at least, it was an act of vengeance on the Statesman who had defied that body.

Routed as the Liberals had been at the General Election, the Radical group had gained in political *prestige*: they had foretold the defeat of Mr. Gladstone, and, by refusing in some cases to support his candidates, they had contributed to the result. They had acted on their threats, and the Conservatives, who had profited by the revolt, naturally looked with interest, and not without a certain left-handed favour, on the men who had done them this good turn. Mr. Chamberlain was one of the new members who specially attracted their curious regard. He was sure to get a good hearing in the House of Commons if he chose his opportunity with discretion. He waited till nearly the end of the Session before he intervened in Debate, and the subject chosen for his Maiden Speech, Lord Sandon's Education Bill, was one on which he was well-informed. In the course of the discussion some reference had been made to the Birmingham School Board, and its action described as a disgrace to the town. Mr. Chamberlain denied that he and his colleagues had evaded

the intention of Mr. Forster's Act, and set up a system of purely Secular Education. They had endeavoured to make attendance compulsory before the new Board Schools were built, and therefore they had found it necessary to provide the fees for poor children at certain Denominational Schools. But this expedient had broken down, simply because hundreds of persons flatly refused to pay this "new Church Rate"—they would rather be distrained upon. The plan was, therefore, abandoned; even the Denominational members of the Board declined to enforce the claim, and provision was made to meet the case by voluntary subscription. Ultimately, it was decided to institute complete separation of the Religious from the Secular Teaching, and never had the former been so efficient as it then became.

It was not till after the meeting of Parliament in the following year (1877), that Mr. Chamberlain addressed the House again. This time it was against the proposal of the Home Secretary (Mr. Cross) to substitute Imperial for Local administration of Prisons. A humorous account of the scene was written at the time by Mr. H. W. Lucy:—

"It would be interesting to know exactly what opinion Sir Walter Barttelot formed of Mr. Chamberlain's probable appearance, before he had the pleasure of meeting him face to face in the House of Commons. He had evidently evolved some fancy picture, for his surprise at seeing the junior member for Birmingham in a coat, and even a waistcoat, and in hearing him speak very good English in a quiet and undemonstrative manner, was undisguised. . . . When, therefore, there arose, from a bench below the gangway opposite, a slightly-made, youthful, almost boyish-looking person, with a black coat fearlessly unbuttoned to display the waistcoat and disclose the shirt-collar and necktie, Sir Walter began to stare, and cast side-glances at that other great legislator, Colonel Corbett, in the startled endeavour to know what he thought of *this*. Moreover, the Radical wore, not spectacles with tin or

brass rims, as Felix Holt would undoubtedly have done if his sight had been impaired, but—an eye-glass. Positively an eye-glass, framed in precisely the same style as that which Colonel Corbett himself wears, when his good-humoured face is turned towards a distant object. Surprise deepened when the Radical, in a low, clear, and admirably-pitched voice, and with a manner self-possessed without being self-assertive, proceeded to discuss the Prisons Bill, opposing it on the very lines which Sir Walter had made his *Torres-Vedras* when he besieged the Bill last session. This was very remarkable; but there was only one thing for an English gentleman to do, and that Sir Walter promptly did.”

When Mr. Chamberlain had finished, Sir Walter walked across the House and shook hands with him. As to the Measure itself, it was not likely that Mr. Chamberlain would support any scheme for increasing Central at the expense of Local authority—that the representative of so self-reliant a town as Birmingham would consent to see its power diminished. There is little doubt that the change in administration which Mr. Chamberlain denounced has been generally beneficial, but it was not difficult to bring forward plausible arguments on the other side. Any little saving made on the Rates would be counter-balanced by a double burden on the Taxes. As for Government contracts, the officials he had always found very civil, but no system was less adapted to obtaining a good article at a fair price. If the Government were taking over the Prisons, why did they not also take over the Industrial Schools and Reformatories? Finally—as a stroke of Parliamentary wit—he protested against the proceedings of the Conservative Government as being Radical and Revolutionary!

Mr. Chamberlain's first Parliamentary Vacation was spent on a visit, in the company of Mr. Jesse Collings, to Sweden and Lapland. If their chief object was recreation, the tour (described in the *Fortnightly Review* for

December 1876) was also utilized for a public purpose. On several occasions Mr. Chamberlain had insisted on the need for legislation to reduce the evils of intemperance, and the system which he favoured was neither penal nor confiscatory. As it was clearly the interest of publicans, or the brewers for whom they were agents, to push the sale of intoxicating liquors, he believed that the traffic should be gradually removed from their hands, and taken over by the Local Authority. Municipal officers employed for the retail business would have no object in attracting customers, nor would they be tempted to supply liquor of a bad quality, or to adulterate it with stimulating ingredients. This, substantially, was the system which had been established in various Swedish towns, especially at Gothenburg, from which its name is taken; and Mr. Chamberlain was anxious to find out, from personal observation and inquiries on the spot, how the principle—which had commended itself to his own mind before he had heard of its application in Sweden—worked out in practice. The favourable accounts which he had received were, it seems, confirmed by what he saw (and was taken to see), though it should be mentioned that other observers have since arrived at a very different opinion on the merits of the Gothenburg system. Mr. Chamberlain, perhaps, made more allowance than was necessary for the fact that the Swedish regulations did not apply to the sale of beer (which was practically unrestricted), and thought, not unnaturally, that the Municipal control would have been more efficient if it had been made complete. He was at least convinced that it embodied a valuable reform, and would much improve the existing state of things. Radical as he was, he was never one of those “logical” politicians who repudiate a partial reform because they cannot carry the whole of their programme.

Soon after his return to Birmingham he placed his views before the Liberal Six Hundred, and in the following January (1877) he induced the Town Council, by

40 votes against 1, to apply to Parliament for powers to adopt a similar Licensing system. By way of keeping the subject alive, he published another Magazine article on it, and gave notice of a Resolution in the House of Commons. On that assembly, though he obtained a good hearing, having already "got the ear of the House," his scheme made no definite impression. Nor did it receive any warm support from the Temperance Party, who then, as now, cared but little for any scheme that started by offering compensation to the licensed victuallers who were to be dispossessed. They had not realised (perhaps they are now just beginning to understand) that the country will never consent to any scheme of general expropriation unless a fair *solatium* is given to the interests affected—whether they are or are not "vested" in the eye of the Law. Mr. Chamberlain was aware of this in 1876, and earnestly pressed his point on the root-and-branch reformers. They were not converted; and in 1894 he admitted that they had kept his scheme in abeyance. He entreated the members of the United Kingdom Alliance to reconsider their position; and until wiser counsels should prevail he feared that the history of Temperance agitation would continue to be "a dismal record of the wrecks of well-meant efforts and promising experiments."

Only last year he repeated this opinion, and renewed his expressions of confidence in the scheme that was shelved by Parliament in 1877, though the House of Lords Committee, before which he appeared as witness that year, reported in favour of giving a trial to this among other expedients. As for the moral argument, that the traffic in strong drink is an accursed thing in which no public body should take part, he made short work of it. By drawing Revenue from the trade, the State was already implicated in any evil there might be. Already it assumed responsibility for the control and regulation of the trade—the only question was whether the duty was efficiently discharged. Mr. Spurgeon had said

—or been reported to say—that if he could save souls by standing on his head he would always preach in that position! “Well,” Mr. Chamberlain went on, “if I could save half the drunkards in Birmingham, if I could relieve them from the consequences of the vice to which they are a prey, if I could increase to that extent the happiness and prosperity of the community by turning publican, I would put on an apron and serve behind a bar to-morrow, and I should say I could not possibly engage in a nobler or more religious work.” At the same time, it must not be forgotten that the existing Licensing System has been attacked by nobody more unsparingly than by Mr. Chamberlain, and, though he has always stood out for what he considers fair treatment for the publicans, he was at one time lampooned and caricatured as bitterly as any Prohibitionist orator, while the Teetotallers have denounced him as a Friend of the Trade. His position on the Temperance question remains what it was in 1887. Only the other day, at Johannesburg, he suggested the adoption of a modified Gothenburg system, and one of his first political utterances, on his return to this country, was to condemn the withdrawal of licences from well-conducted houses without compensation to the tenants.

Other subjects in which he intervened in Debate during the early years of his Parliamentary career related chiefly to Local Government, the state of Endowed Schools in Ireland, the prevention of Cattle Disease, and various legal reforms connected with Patents, Bankruptcy, and Merchant Shipping. On these, and similar subjects, he spoke with the authority of a practical man of business, and with the lucidity that pleases an assembly which likes to be instructed easily. The *réclame* of a slashing platform orator had preceded him at Westminster: but he had established, before Parliament was dissolved in 1880, the more useful reputation of a man who does not shrink from the trouble of getting up a host of complicated

facts, while his controversial sallies on such matters as Flogging in the Army, and on the Eastern Question—which had then reached an acute state—showed him to be as effective in *ex-tempore* discussion as in set speeches. He was, in fact, engaged, whether intentionally or not, in moulding himself to the accepted type of Parliamentary Statesmanship.

Though cautiousness of speech has never been accounted one of his qualities, and though he employed on foreign politics some of the strong language which he used so freely in regard to domestic affairs, he managed not to commit himself to propositions which a few years later might prove embarrassing. He remembered in Opposition that he might hereafter become a responsible Minister of State. From his first entry into the House of Commons, there can be no doubt that Mr. Chamberlain regarded himself as member of some future, and not very distant, Administration. Though a vigorous assailant of Mr. Disraeli's policy in the East, he spoke without enthusiasm of Russia, and kept his invectives against Turkey within the bounds of moderation. He dwelt on the advisability of strengthening the Greek Kingdom—the *enfant gâté* of English Radicalism—as a bulwark against Muscovite aggression in Europe; suggested that Great Britain might arrive at an amicable understanding with the Czar's Government; and did not believe that Russia had any desire to possess herself of India. No nation could covet so onerous a dominion!

It has often been said of Mr. Chamberlain, that he was at this time one of the "Little Englanders"—a name not then invented—nor can it be denied that he accepted and generally approved the lines laid down by Mr. Gladstone at this, the most passionate, epoch of an animated career. No Liberal politician of the time spoke more scornfully than Mr. Chamberlain of "the noisy Imperialism of the music-halls," or sought more eagerly to depreciate the Peace with Honour which Lord Beaconsfield and



Lord Salisbury brought back from Berlin in 1878. It cannot be pretended that he had realised the future importance of our Possessions in South Africa, or the necessity for extending and consolidating our Empire in that part of the world. He disparaged the Annexation of the Transvaal in 1877, as in 1881 he became a party to the Retrocession; he denounced the conduct of Sir Bartle Frere in Zululand in 1879, just as in 1880 he joined in demanding the recall of that energetic High Commissioner.

Nor can it properly be urged, by those who seek to credit a Statesman whom they admire with life-long consistency of opinion, that he may have dissented in private from the collective attitude of the Ministry to which he belonged. This plea may or may not apply to anything that happened between 1880 and 1885; but from 1876 to 1880 he was a "free lance," and made a demonstrative use of his liberty. If he had disagreed with the views of the Liberal Leaders on South African affairs, there was nothing to prevent him from proclaiming the difference. Nor would he have scrupled to do so. On other subjects, he did not hesitate to flout his official leaders. In the discussion, for instance, on Flogging in the Army, the Conservative Ministers had practically conceded the Radical demand, but, on a Conservative revolt being led by Sir Walter Barttelot, they withdrew from a compromise which had been almost arranged. There was great indignation on the Radical benches, but Lord Hartington, coming down late, and not being informed of the latest development of affairs, got up and deprecated a continuance of the discussion! It was on this provocation that Mr. Chamberlain renounced his allegiance to "the late Leader of the Liberal Party." The insubordinate phrase created the impression which had been intended, and showed, if further evidence was required, that the author meant to strike out a course of his own at Westminster. It was, therefore, from no sense of Party obliga-

tions—indeed, he had never enrolled himself as a Liberal—that he abstained from expressing disapproval of the policy with regard to South Africa which was then in favour with official Liberalism.

Although this is a charge of which Mr. Chamberlain cannot be absolved, it is a reproach that he shares with all the Statesmen of his day—on both sides of the House. The prescience of Sir Bartle Frere has been vindicated by subsequent events, but it was not then appreciated. We know now that the Zulu power had to be crushed, and that the operation could not have been postponed, if we meant to save the sparse British population of Natal from the horrors of an invasion by Cetuywayo's barbarian horde; that in precipitating the collision, as Frere undoubtedly did, he showed the best form of prudence. But it is also true that he acted in excess of his instructions from the Home Government, and, in fact, forced the hand of the Colonial Office. For his official indiscretion the Empire owes him no slight debt of gratitude; but at the time it was deeply resented, and he received a sharp reprimand from the Conservative Minister (Sir Michael Hicks-Beach) who was then Secretary of State for the Colonies.

It was argued by Liberals—by none more strongly than Mr. Chamberlain—that if Ministers did not approve Frere's action they were bound to recall him. But this was at present impossible without bringing disgrace on the British name, and without exposing the loyal natives to the vengeance of the rebels. The Colonists believed in Frere, and to order him home, when they were fighting for very life, would have been a heavy strain on their loyalty. For the present, therefore, it was essential that he should remain at his post, and the Conservative Ministers, though they regretted what they thought his headstrong action, had no course but to accept responsibility for what had been done. Naturally, the Opposition took full advantage of their dilemma, and much political

capital was made out of a thoroughly unpopular, and by no means glorious, little war by politicians who believed—with excusable fervour—that the first essential of the hour was to throw the Conservatives out of office, and climb into power. Having committed themselves to wholesale denunciation of Frere's policy, they had no option, when they became responsible for affairs, but to relieve him of his post. It was equally natural that the displaced Conservatives, who had borne the odium of his proceedings, should seek such compensation as they could then obtain by treating him as a martyr sacrificed to gratify the factious spirit of the victors.

As we have seen, Frere had received but grudging support from the Conservatives when they could have backed him effectively, but, like every other Administration of either Party, their chief desire with regard to the Colonies was to hear as little as possible about them, and to be spared every expense that might be avoided. In this political indifference to the Empire, and in this desire to keep down the cost of the Army, English Statesmen did but reflect the general feeling of the country. A few voices were raised, once or twice a year, crying in the wilderness of the House of Commons on the Colonial Office Vote; but they were not listened to, and a perfunctory reply from the Treasury Bench was considered to dispose of the whole complaint. The affairs of South Africa were treated with especial neglect. The general belief was that nothing in that region was of much consequence to us, so long as we could hold the Cape, and thus protect our alternative route to India; and as to the power of our Navy in this respect no reasonable misgivings had yet been expressed in any quarter regarded as authoritative. The inner politics of that vast but thinly-inhabited region were dismissed as no concern of ours. Nor was public interest reawakened until the extraordinary mismanagement of our relations with the Boers of the Transvaal had brought ignominy on the British

name, and provided the Conservative Opposition with a useful battle-cry.

For his full share in the blame that was visited on his Party for their conduct after they took office in 1880, Mr. Chamberlain has never attempted to disclaim responsibility, though it has been said by some of his more intimate friends that he was never quite easy in his mind about the policy of the Government. Jokingly, but not by way of praise, Mr. Bright declared that Mr. Chamberlain was "the only Jingo in Mr. Gladstone's Cabinet." However that may have been, he was no "Jingo," not even a moderate Imperialist, when he was helping (from 1876 to 1880) to overthrow the Conservative Government. His speeches on South Africa do, indeed, prove that he had, unlike most Statesmen of the day, taken the trouble to master the details of Colonial history, and he made out a strong case in Parliament for a general inquiry into the manner in which we had found ourselves involved in a series of embarrassing, fruitless, and costly operations. On the other hand, one does not discover any adequate appreciation of the future value of our South African Possessions, or—with an exception that will be noted hereafter—any desire to forestall other Powers in the acquisition of unappropriated territory. The truth is, that Mr. Chamberlain, like the majority of his countrymen, was converted to a bolder policy, first, perhaps, by the revelation that Ministers had played an unpopular part in their dealings with the Boers, but chiefly, though not for some years to come, by the sudden increase of the English-speaking population in the gold-bearing districts of the Transvaal.

For the time, Mr. Chamberlain had thrown in his lot with Mr. Gladstone, and stood by him in his South African as well as in his Eastern policy. The titular headship of the Party did, indeed, still remain with Lord Hartington, and Mr. Chamberlain, we know, had supported his election to that office in preference to Mr. Forster. But, as we have seen, he had publicly withdrawn his allegiance, and

it was perfectly obvious, after the famous speeches delivered by Mr. Gladstone in the "Midlothian Campaign," that no other Liberal Statesman could command the obedience of the Party. It was on those celebrated orations that the General Election of 1880 was fought and won, but, before the issue had been declared, and while it was even yet doubtful, the Radical member for Birmingham had definitely identified himself with Mr. Gladstone. Nor was he contented with giving his personal adherence. He brought with him the great political machine which he had been chiefly instrumental in creating. As the admitted controller of the Caucus, which then had its headquarters at Birmingham, and which still held aloof from the Party Whips, he held the power of either uniting or breaking-up the Opposition. He did not hesitate about his course. The Radicals had their causes of quarrel with the Whigs: between the two groups there were questions which would have to be settled in the future; but Mr. Chamberlain had no mind to fight them out in the face of the common adversary. Moreover, though he felt much confidence in the local strength of the new political organisation, it was as yet almost untried, and it was, perhaps, premature to throw down a challenge. The word was given for the Caucus to work on behalf of Liberal candidates, whether Whig or Radical. It was "sheer nonsense," Mr. Chamberlain declared, to say that they could not co-operate. The differences between Liberals and Conservatives were far greater than between Whigs and Radicals.

It was in 1877 that Mr. Gladstone had first, as it were, been adopted by the still inchoate Caucus. He paid his first visit to Birmingham on 31st May, and delivered one of his customary Philippics against Turkey. Mr. Chamberlain confined himself to advocating domestic reforms (Free Church, Free Schools, and Free Land), and to arguing for the establishment of a Federation of "all Liberal Associations founded on the principle of popular election."

In commenting on the event in the *Fortnightly Review*, he pointed out that no attempt had been made at Birmingham to commit Mr. Gladstone to a definite programme. On the other hand, "the most popular Statesman of our time" had expressed his sympathy with the efforts of those who were seeking to restore the fortunes of the Party, and had admitted the claims of the Radicals to recognition and fair consideration in the Party councils. The meaning of these politic ambiguities was sufficiently clear. The Radicals had declared for Mr. Gladstone as Prime Minister, and he had intimated that they would be represented in his next Cabinet. There was no formal pledge on either side, but it was agreed that an active policy of attack should be initiated without delay, and the country was to be roused against Ministers by a systematic agitation. Those Leaders who held back should be gently incited to the display of a fighting spirit, and the Federation was to keep them up to the mark! They must be persuaded to "move a little quicker and go a little further!" There was no sort of hostility to Lord Hartington; except Mr. Gladstone, no Liberal commanded so much confidence and support! "Surely the Federation might impress him with the necessity for giving direction to the labours of the Liberals, without having imputed to them disloyalty to their Chief in a reckless eagerness to break up the Party."

The personal relations between Mr. Bright and Mr. Chamberlain had always been, and they always remained, something more than friendly. The younger man—though, as we have seen, he dissented, even as a lad, from the Peace Principles advocated by the elder—had missed no opportunity of hearing the great orator. In their joint representation of Birmingham there was the most complete accord, yet it would be difficult to quote a case of two politicians, so closely associated, who disagreed so profoundly on important questions of the day, or approached politics from more widely different points of view. Just

at this time—the latter years of the Disraeli Government—they were, for all practical purposes, in substantial harmony, and Mr. Chamberlain advised the Liberal Leaders to follow the example of the most earnest, honest, and popular member of the Party—they would never have to complain of ingratitude or indifference.

In their dislike of Clerical influence in the Schools, and in their support of the Nonconformist demand for purely Secular Education, there was no difference between the Quaker and the Unitarian. In the agitation for wide-reaching reforms of our Land System, they could warmly co-operate; both were members of that manufacturing class which, since the days of Free Trade, had nursed a traditional quarrel with the landed interest, and both were animated with a genuine desire to improve the condition and win the support of the agricultural labourers—who were to be made the beneficiaries of the next great Reform Bill.

Here, perhaps, the agreement came to an end, Mr. Bright, confident in his unsurpassed qualities of oratory, believed in moving the people by moral suasion and by constant appeals to the nobler passions of man. He knew nothing, and cared nothing, about organising victory and forming popular opinion. Mr. Chamberlain worked by political machinery and by Programmes. On the occasion of Mr. Gladstone's visit to Birmingham, Mr. Bright had bantered Mr. Chamberlain on his energy and impatience. "I can see he is looking at me," he said, "through his glass, only waiting till I have finished, to get up and protest against what I have said." Nevertheless, though Mr. Bright hated Programmes and ignored the Caucus, he did not object to making use of the facilities provided by the organisers, while Mr. Chamberlain and his associates did not under-estimate the political value of their alliance with the great emotional Statesman. Nor was the elder man forgetful of his obligations to the younger. On the conclusion of one of Mr. Chamberlain's

speeches at Rochdale (November 1877), Mr. Bright said:—

“He has done great service in his own town. There, where he is best known, he is best appreciated. To-night you will give him the warm and cordial and enthusiastic welcome which we owe to every man who in a public position earnestly and consistently endeavours, so far as lies in his power, to give good government to the population of this great Empire. This speech will have large influence amongst you, and wherever it is read. I hope every one of us will feel that we have had a great treat, and that we have been taught a great lesson, and it is our duty to follow the advice he has given us, and to join with the Liberal Party in every part of the kingdom in impressing on the Liberal Leaders that there are yet great things to be done.”

The political faith of Mr. Bright was clear and concise: it was comprised in and bounded by the elements of Political Economy as interpreted by the “Manchester School.” He was content to expound the doctrines of Cobden:—“Freedom of trade,” it has been said, “freedom of contract, the right of every individual to all liberty which did not interfere with the equal liberty of some other individual, the duty of the State to interfere as little as possible in the private affairs of its citizens, and only to preserve public order, and keep the field open for unrestricted competition—these were the axioms, clear and rigid, by which the old Radicals stood, and which in their time did much to improve the condition and elevate the character of the English people. The coldness and the hardness of the creed, that devil-take-the-hindmost spirit which animated the whole body of doctrine, were for a time disguised by the emotional character of some of the men who professed it. John Mill, for instance, while pressing these views to their utmost extreme in his *Political Economy*, inserted in that famous work many passages—quite inconsistent with its main thesis—which breathed the



warmest sympathy with those who, by no fault of their own, came off second-best in the struggle for existence. Bright, again, though he could argue logically when he chose, appealed less to the reason than to the heart, and the underlying harshness, not of his own nature, but of the principles he had adopted, only came out when he opposed tooth-and-nail the humane Factory Legislation proposed by the Conservatives. It was a violation, he believed, and rightly believed, of his cardinal doctrine, that the State should not interfere with the liberty and discretion of private individuals. And the manufacturing class to which he belonged regarded such paternal innovations as inspired, not by any sympathy with the working-classes, but by a desire on the part of the country gentlemen to revenge themselves on the mercantile philanthropists who had abolished the Protective Duties which made farming profitable enough to support high rents. But even at this date the full meaning and real consequences of the old-fashioned Economy had not yet impressed themselves on the mind even of thoughtful politicians. Mr. Chamberlain never seems to have pinned his faith to theories on which, unconsciously, he had made so extensive an inroad by the example of State, or, more correctly, of Municipal Socialism, which he had set by his administrative work in Birmingham."

Again, Mr. Bright's outlook on politics was purely English. Mr. Chamberlain's mind was largely influenced (as was that of his friend Mr. John Morley) by the sentimental aspects of French Revolution philosophers. He spoke out bravely about the "Rights of Man," as if the "Social Contract" theory on which they were based had not long ago been exploded, and, though kindly enlightened by instructors on the Press, blandly persisted in error. Though, as has been shown already, he had no sympathy with the violent forms of Communism, and more than once repudiated the theory that any legislation could make and keep men equal, or that such a state of things would be desirable, he was not afraid of the name of

Socialist. Some of the phrases which he flung out in controversy—notably, his declaration about “Ransom”—showed that he was no unconditional believer in the sanctity of Private Property, and held that Prescription could only be justified if it were accompanied by a genuine sense of Obligation. In adopting such theories as these—from which he was prepared to deduce practical proposals—he stood at almost the opposite pole to the Political Economists who provided Mr. Bright with his working Gospel.

Nor was this the only point of contrast between the two members for Birmingham. Mr. Bright was a rigid and, within his limits, an exact thinker, whose opinions flowed directly from such data as his mind had assimilated. It was in expression only that he gave way to sentiment, imagination, and a certain vein of poetry. He used human passion as a sort of hammer to drive in the nails of his logic. But he was almost inaccessible to new ideas, and, though not consciously uncandid with himself, found it very difficult to appreciate facts not in accord with his preconceived general views. Mr. Chamberlain, on the other hand, has always been ready, unless engaged in an active personal controversy, to look at both sides of a question, and his views have never been so solid that they might not be modified by fresh evidence or changed by a new current of feeling. His political theories and public career have been determined quite as much by sentiment—by sympathy, by indignation, even by personal affection or resentment—as by reason and calculation. Yet, in expounding the opinions which for the time he holds with almost passionate conviction, he seldom attempts to touch men’s deeper feelings. He sets out his facts in lucid sequence; his humour is chiefly displayed in exposing the sophistries or inconsistencies of an opponent; he appears always as the advocate, never as the evangelist.

The natural differences between the two Birmingham Statesmen made them especially formidable in combina-

tion. Nor could Radicals in Opposition have desired a better object to attack than the Imperialist policy of Lord Beaconsfield. Looking back on that Statesman's work from the distance of a quarter of a century, though we can see that much in it was solid and enduring, we need not be surprised that, in 1880, it was condemned by the country. True, he had purchased the Suez Canal shares, he had occupied Cyprus, and annexed the Transvaal. But it was not at the time foreseen what an excellent investment we had made in Egypt; Cyprus was represented chiefly as a burden; the Transvaal was considered a worthless tract. On the other side of the account was the considerable outlay of money (£6,000,000 sterling) on military precautions: the Zulu War had never been popular; the *imbroglio* in Afghanistan, which began with the murder of Sir Louis Cavagnari, had only been saved by the genius of Stewart and Roberts from resulting in sheer disaster; we had given mortal offence to Russia, and had associated ourselves with support of Turkish misrule. We had done nothing to strengthen the Greek Kingdom, and had helped to cripple the Bulgarian Principality—two small Powers which for the time were in great favour with English Liberalism. To increase the general discontent, the Chancellor of the Exchequer had to impose fresh burdens on the taxpayer at a time when trade was languishing and agriculture suffering under a depression that seemed likely to be permanent.

The one great and lasting benefit which Lord Beaconsfield had conferred on the country was not generally recognised, and its genuine value was, it must be admitted, not a little obscured by the tawdry forms in which it was manifested. When he took office, and for a good many years before, the general feeling of Englishmen was that their country could no longer play a great part in the world; the Non-intervention theory which had so long guided our policy, useful as it had been in its day, had bred a spirit of habitual long-suffering which caused us to

be ignored in the Councils of Europe. The Imperialism of Lord Beaconsfield, though it brought us to the brink of acute conflict, and though music-hall braggadocio gave it sometimes an offensive expression, did brace the national spirit and revive the old self-reliance of the English people. It is true that during the ensuing five years (1880-1885) we received more affronts, and suffered more reverses, than in any corresponding period of our recent history; but a growing proportion of the nation did resent the indignities placed upon it, and, though Mr. Gladstone managed to secure a majority on his next appeal to the country, his English support had fallen away. This was due neither to any failure of his own marvellous powers as a leader of opinion, nor to any growth of capacity among the Conservatives, but simply to the seed which Lord Beaconsfield had sown. It had to force its way through the tares—planted, some will say, by his own hand—but it did struggle up, though he did not live to reap the harvest.

When the weary Statesman announced, on 8th March 1880, that Parliament would shortly be dissolved, and issued his famous Letter to the Duke of Marlborough, Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, he based his claim to a renewal of power on a direct appeal to the Imperial instinct of Englishmen. During the previous six years, he declared that Ministers had devoted much attention to the interests of Ireland. Yet the arts of agitators had counteracted the liberal and prudent measures of the Legislature. That country was distracted by a danger "scarcely less disastrous in its ultimate results than pestilence and famine." A portion of its population were endeavouring to sever its Constitutional tie to Great Britain. Men of "light and leading" were implored to resist that "destructive doctrine"; the strength of the nation depended on the unity of feeling that should pervade the United Kingdom and its widespread Dependencies. Yet there were some who challenged the expediency of the Imperial character of the Realm. Having attempted, and failed, to enfeeble the

Colonies by their "policy of decomposition," they might recognise in the "disintegration of the United Kingdom" a method by which they would "not only accomplish but precipitate their purpose." Rarely had there been an occasion more critical. The power of England and the Peace of Europe would largely depend on the verdict of the country. "Ministers have hitherto been enabled to secure that Peace, so necessary to the welfare of all civilised countries, and so peculiarly the interest of our own. But this ineffable blessing cannot be obtained by the passive principle of Non-interference. Peace rests on the presence, not to say the ascendancy, of England in the Councils of Europe."

The vague and grandiloquent language of this Manifesto was eagerly fastened on by the Opposition. They pointed out, not without plausibility, that the continuance of a Conservative Administration meant a prolonged period of foreign complications. The country was tired of anxiety, of wars and rumours of war, and it stood in need of many important domestic reforms, both social and political. As for Lord Beaconsfield's dark sayings about Ireland, they were only derided as mere *charlatanerie*. Home Rule, as it was then known in Parliament, was but the impracticable and almost Academical demand of a small group at Westminster, and there was no apparent likelihood of its ever being adopted by the Liberal Party. As for the secret conspiracies with which Ireland was said to be honeycombed, they were, it was thought, but a figment of Lord Beaconsfield's romancing genius. Not for some months to come was it realised that below his mysterious phrases was concealed a knowledge of hard facts and a prescient understanding of influences actually in operation.

It was an unequal battle. The Conservatives had no popular Leader outside the House of Commons. Sir Stafford Northcote was generally respected, but his was no name to conjure with. Lord Beaconsfield was evidently a failing man; Lord Salisbury was still considered a dan-

gerous politician; nor could either of them take any personal part in the electoral struggle. It was left for Mr. Gladstone, then at the height of his controversial powers, to sweep the board, assisted as he was by a very remarkable group of Statesmen, all distinguished for intellectual vigour in their different ways, who had not yet revealed that their mental powers were far superior to their administrative capacity. Lord Hartington, Lord Granville, Mr. Bright, and Sir William Harcourt appealed each to separate elements of Liberal opinion, and, to quote an expressive vulgarism, they all "went in solid for the Grand Old Man." It is impossible to say what the result would have been if Mr. Chamberlain and his following in the Midlands had held aloof—how far the Liberal majority of 1880 might have been reduced. But, as we have seen, he had undertaken to support Mr. Gladstone, and, in pursuance of the friendly arrangement which had been thus informally concluded, he placed the services of the Radical Caucus at the disposal of the Liberal Party. The net result was that 349 Liberals were returned against 243 Conservatives and 60 Home Rulers.

In seven only of the sixty-seven Constituencies in which the Caucus had been fairly established was the candidate rejected who had received its support. Naturally, Mr. Chamberlain claimed and received credit for its work. It was only to be expected, on the other hand, that this very efficient organisation should be denounced by the Conservatives. They were eloquent on the mischief of "machine politics" and the introduction of degrading American institutions into the public life of England. It was in reply to such criticisms that Mr. Chamberlain used the following expressions in 1883:—

"I know," he said, "that there are some who express alarm at the recent development of our Liberal organisations. They denounce it as the Caucus; they describe it as a machine. I am not surprised that the Tories should dislike it. I do not wonder that they feel so painfully what

they unsuccessfully tried to imitate. These great, open, popular Representative Associations are not at all in their line. They are alien to the spirit of Toryism. The 'Primrose League' is more in their way, with its silly, sentimental title. I confess I am surprised when I find these organisations objected to and criticised by many who profess themselves in sympathy with the Democratic movement. Why, the Democratic movement would lose all its force without organisation. The difficulty of Radicalism in times past has always been that there was no cohesion among the people. Napoleon III told Mr. Cobden, in conversation, that private interests were like a disciplined regiment, while the public good was defended by a disorganised mob. The force of Democracy, to be strong, must be concentrated. It must not be frittered away into numberless units, each of them so preciously independent that no one of them can unite with another even for a single day."

In 1885, again, Mr. Chamberlain declared that the Caucus was the servant of the People, not its master: it was an engine for concentrating popular opinion, and securing its effectual representation. It was the medium for keeping the Leaders of a Party in touch with, or, if necessary, under the control of, their supporters. Nor should it be forgotten that, when it turned against him in 1886, he maintained the same views of its rights and limitations.

But the best flattery is imitation, and all the essential features of the National Liberal Federation were reproduced in the National Union of Conservative and Constitutional Associations, though that body never acquired the same dominating influence which was for a time exercised by its original. It has always been regarded more as an arena for discussion than as a director of policy, and "independent members" have been encouraged to air their private theories quite without prejudice to the Party as a whole. Its practical activity, like that of the Primrose

League, has been limited to Election times, and it has been preserved by its moderation. The National Liberal Federation, though still an energetic association, has been crippled by attempting too much. The removal of its headquarters from Birmingham to London, where it was placed in the same building as the Liberal Central Association, and more or less controlled by the Party Whips, deprived it of that contact with outside opinion which its founders had claimed as its chief merit. But in 1880 it was still young, and it was absolutely unofficial. As its Chief, Mr. Chamberlain would have been entitled almost to ask his own terms from the Statesman whom he had so materially helped to power. It was inevitable that the *Free-Lance* leader should be offered a command in the Regular forces.



## CHAPTER III

### THE RADICALS AND IRELAND

The condemnation of the Conservative Administration by the country was so unmistakable that Lord Beaconsfield saw no use in waiting for the meeting of Parliament, and being ejected by a formal vote. On 18th April he went down to Windsor and offered his resignation, which the Queen accepted "with much regret." Observing the strict Constitutional etiquette, he recommended as his successor the nominal Leader of the Opposition. For five years Lord Hartington had carried on the somewhat thankless work, and nobody could have blamed him if he had claimed the natural reward. But, even if he had wished to stand on his rights, it would have been impossible for him to keep a majority together in the House of Commons. The Radicals meant to have Mr. Gladstone, and nobody but Mr. Gladstone would they accept. They did not wish to drive Lord Hartington from the Party, nor could they have afforded to do so. They would work with him, but not under him. The point was never raised, because his loyalty to his old Chief forbade him to enter into such a competition. On his declining the office of Prime Minister, it was considered necessary to offer the reversion to Lord Granville. This was merely absurd. Clever and genial as the Liberal Peer was, he possessed none of the qualifications for command. Like Lord Hartington, he stood aside for Mr. Gladstone, who was then "sent for" by the Queen, and commanded to form an Administration. With the



#### GLADSTONE'S SECOND MINISTRY, 1880-85

"No more capable set of ruling men", says Mr. Morley (*Life of Gladstone*, vol. iii, p. 2), "were ever got together than the Cabinet of 1880; no men who better represented the leading elements in the country, in all their variety and strength. The great possessors of land were there, and the heirs of long governing tradition were there; the industrious and the sedate of the middle classes found their men seated at the council board, by the side of others whose keen-sighted ambition sought sources of power in the ranks of manual toil; the Church saw one of the most ardent of her sons on the woolsack, and the most illustrious of them in the highest place of all; the people of the Chapel beheld with complacency the rising man of the future in one who publicly boasted an unbroken line of Nonconformist descent." The plate shows the most distinguished of the deceased members of this great Ministry: the Prime Minister and Chancellor of the Exchequer, William Ewart Gladstone (1809-98); the Foreign Secretary, Granville George Leveson-Gower, second Earl Granville (1815-91); the Colonial Secretary and (from 1882) Indian Secretary, John Wodehouse, first Earl of Kimberley (1826-1902); and John Bright (1811-89), Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster till 1882. Portraits of other members of the Ministry are given elsewhere in the book.

GLADSTONE'S SECOND MINISTRY: 1880-1885



RT. HON. W. E. GLADSTONE

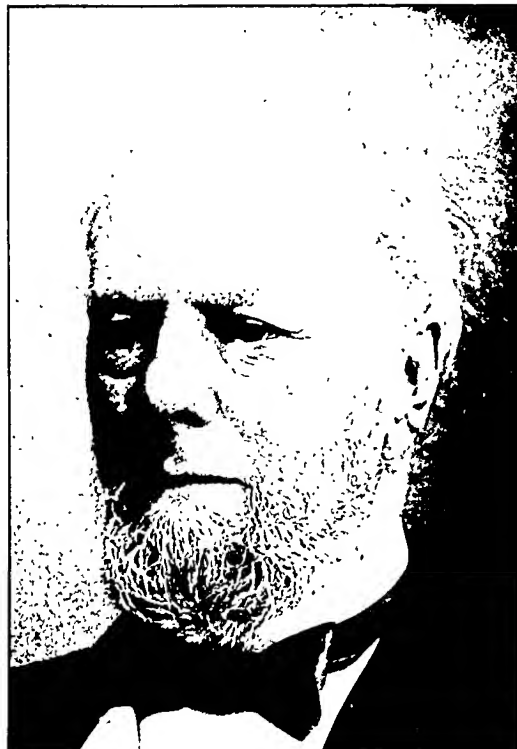
*Walker*



RT. HON. JOHN BRIGHT



EARL GRANVILLE



EARL OF KIMBERLEY

*Stereoscopic*



office of Prime Minister he combined the Chancellorship of the Exchequer. Lord Granville went to the Foreign and Lord Hartington to the India Office. Mr. Childers became Secretary of State for War, and Lord Northbrook First Lord of the Admiralty. Sir William Harcourt was Home Secretary; the Duke of Argyll, Privy Seal; Mr. Forster, Chief Secretary for Ireland; Mr. Adam, First Commissioner of Works; Lord Kimberley was given the then secondary post of Colonial Secretary, and Lord Selborne was made Lord Chancellor. All these appointments were what might have been anticipated; the Ministers were men of official experience, and belonged to the more cautious section of the Party. Mr. Fawcett, who was given the Post Office, and Mr. Mundella, the Vice-President of the Council, were more "advanced" in their views, but neither of them represented the Birmingham type of Radicalism, while the admission of Mr. Forster to the Cabinet, though thoroughly justified by his position in the country, his services to the Party, and his administrative experience, was eminently distasteful to the militant Nonconformists, who had by no manner of means laid aside their grudge against the author of the Education Act of 1870.

What, then, was to be done for the Radicals? Mr. Gladstone had declared in public that the "men who were in earnest" should be admitted to the Councils of the Party—*i.e.*, there should be a Radical element in his new Cabinet. There was no personal bargain with Mr. Chamberlain—no pledge, given or implied, that he should be the selected representative of the Forward Group. But it was no fulfilment of the Birmingham understanding to make Mr. Bright Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. In the first place, he could not have been left out of Mr. Gladstone's Cabinet—his popular influence was too important. In the second place, his Radicalism was in 1880 already becoming antiquated. Finally, though he could always make a great impression in the country

when he braced himself for a special effort, he had no taste for the routine of daily detail, no head for business, and his aptitudes had been nicely fitted in the dignified sinecure allotted to him by the Prime Minister. It would be going too far to say that he was the "sleeping partner," in the Government, because he would on occasion arouse himself with very signal effect, but he could not be regarded as an efficient and vigilant representative of the Radical interest.

That duty and distinction lay between two men, closely associated in political views and personal friendship—Sir Charles Dilke and Mr. Chamberlain. Both were men of extreme views, rising influence, and untiring industry. Each considered himself entitled to a place in the Cabinet—each was assured of some position in the Government. But they were too shrewd, and too closely united in mutual regard, to run against each other. They had agreed that neither would accept any office unless one or other should be taken into the Cabinet. By this loyal and judicious arrangement they defeated certain old-fashioned colleagues of Mr. Gladstone who objected to the admission of either, and hoped, by playing off one against the other, to secure the exclusion of both from the charmed circle. Eventually an arrangement was made which was equally satisfactory to Sir Charles Dilke and Mr. Chamberlain. The former had an unrivalled knowledge of Continental politics, and was offered the Under-Secretaryship of State for Foreign Affairs. Since his Chief, Lord Granville, was a member of the Upper House, Sir Charles became the mouthpiece of the Government in the Commons, and obtained a position which is practically more important than that of a second-class Cabinet Minister. This cleared the way for Mr. Chamberlain, who was made President of the Board of Trade, an office for which he was specially designated by his career as a business man in Birmingham.

If the new Minister was to do justice to himself in a

busy and exacting Department, it was necessary to claim release from his remaining Municipal obligations. The retiring Alderman was accorded by the Mayor (Mr. Richard Chamberlain) and Corporation a public vote of thanks for his past work in Birmingham. Moreover, his services were commemorated by the presentation to the town of a fountain, with his medallion, which stands in Chamberlain Square, between statues of George Dawson, the well-known preacher, and Sir Josiah Mason, founder of the College that bears his name and has since been incorporated in the new Birmingham University. In the same year Mr. Chamberlain gave up his house at Edgbaston, and went to live at "Highbury," which had been built for him near Moor Green, and stood in large grounds, where he set up glass-houses for the cultivation of orchids—which was now almost his only relaxation from public activity.

His influence in the Cabinet was felt almost at once. On the other hand, it must not be supposed that he always, or generally, got his own way. Almost from the beginning the Cabinet was a scene of conflict between the Whig and the Radical elements, the balance being swayed, first one way and then the other, by those members who had not definitely committed themselves to either side, though a certain outward harmony was maintained by the strong personal authority of the Prime Minister. It was not likely that Mr. Chamberlain, who had only been four years in Parliament, would already venture to beard Mr. Gladstone. "I don't see how we are to get on," he once said, "if Gladstone goes" (see Mr. Morley's *Life of Gladstone*). The Prime Minister was receptive of new ideas, accessible to fresh advisers, amenable to pressure if judiciously applied, but he never allowed his personal authority to be challenged. Some of his colleagues had studied the various ways of "getting the measure of his foot," and had raised their pursuit almost to the dignity of a fine art. In that kind of diplomacy Mr. Chamberlain has



never excelled, and his methods, when he was still young to Imperial politics, were much less accommodating than they have since been rendered by long years of administrative experience. But when he was overborne he never fell into the blunder that Lord Randolph Churchill committed once too often—that of considering himself indispensable, and offering his resignation in the belief that it would not be accepted. On one occasion, as we shall see, Mr. Chamberlain did express a wish to retire from the Government, but that was for a very special reason. In a general way, he relied chiefly on his singular powers of persuasion.

Those who only know Mr. Chamberlain on the platform, or from his place in Parliament, may be unable to account for his remarkable success in bringing men round to his views. In public, especially when he has been attacked, he seems to feel a boyish delight in saying just the thing that will goad his opponents to fury. Probably he does not always intend to give mortal offence, but the surprise which their resentment gives him soon passes away, and on the next occasion he is quite likely to repeat the indiscretion. But that is a failing which he seldom exhibits in private deliberation, even when there is an acute difference of opinion. He argues his case with excellent temper; he listens carefully to the other side; he will even modify his view on some point of detail, or agree to a reasonable compromise, and he leaves persons who at the outset may have distrusted him with an absolute belief in his sincerity. All these qualities he employed with effect in the first Cabinet of which he was a member, and with the Prime Minister he was eminently fortunate. It was in this way, perhaps, that Mr. Gladstone's Second Administration was led into some of the inconsistencies which did it so much harm in public opinion. Sometimes the Old Whigs had their will, sometimes the Radicals, and the result was the Government, collectively, appeared to be a vacillating body, and were taunted, not without justice, by Lord Salisbury on the "sharp curves" which they so frequently executed.

There was no secret made—though Cabinet etiquette forbade any formal disclosure—of the differences that agitated Mr. Gladstone's Government. With all the frankness that the subject permitted, Mr. Chamberlain, after little more than a year's apprenticeship, explained his methods to his constituents. A Liberal Government which was representative of the Party must include men of different shades of opinion. They would all be animated with substantially the same principle, but, though all would be moving in the same direction, the order and rate, even the means and instruments, of progress would be capable of great variety. No single man, therefore, was entitled to expect always to carry his own personal view. They must all be ready to make concessions, and, when the decision of the majority had been formed after full discussion, they must all be ready to put it into force.

Excellent official sentiments! No placeman could have spoken better! But the value lay in the application. What did Mr. Chamberlain mean by "full discussion"? And how often did he think that a question might be reopened? The truth was, though he could not say as much in public, that he never accepted an adverse decision, as final. For the time he might be, and often was, beaten, but on the first opportunity he would begin the fight all over again. Indeed, though never disloyal, he was, in the first Cabinet to which he belonged, a somewhat uncomfortable colleague; and it happened that among those with whom he had to co-operate were several men with wills as firm as his own, and of much longer experience in public affairs—men not predisposed to favour any proposal that savoured of Birmingham Radicalism. Often, then, he was overborne by the weight of numbers and authority, and for the time he would give way, but only to wait for a favourable opportunity of renewing the struggle. This persistency of purpose, confirmed by several years of almost unchallenged domination in his Town Council, had not yet been modified by the larger transactions and wider

considerations of national statecraft; he does not seem to have appreciated the value of Compromise until the rupture of the Liberal Party in 1886 compelled him to arrange a *modus vivendi* with his old adversaries. With them, however, it was comparatively easy to arrive at a general understanding that might on both sides be faithfully observed. But with his associates in a Liberal Administration it was not possible to strike a definite bargain. Towards them the only duty he recognised was to lead them, one by one, and step by step, towards the Advanced Programme which he kept steadily in view. It was too early to talk about secession. He might have been taken at his word—some of his colleagues would have jumped at the chance of getting rid of him. A well-established Statesman may strengthen his position by a timely resignation: for the probationer it is only a confession of failure. Mr. Chamberlain followed the more prudent, and in the long run more effective, method: he “kept on pegging away.”

The results of his tactics, alternately aggressive and yielding, were especially shown in the curiously inconstant policy of the Government with regard to Ireland. On other grounds, as we have seen, no love was lost between Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. Forster. But the antagonism which had arisen over the Education Act of 1870 was revived and intensified on the question of Coercion. Personal rancour there was none on either side, but before the controversy had been long in progress each was doing his best to drive the other out of the Cabinet. Neither man could see any good in the policy of the other, and there was, besides, a certain incompatibility of temper. In the personal struggle Mr. Chamberlain was successful. It was Mr. Forster's posthumous revenge that the victor was before long advocating the very Measures which he had so strongly disapproved, and was, in his turn, denounced by the same adversaries—and almost in identical language. Rich as was the vocabulary of Nationalist abuse, it con-



#### HIGHBURY, MR. CHAMBERLAIN'S RESIDENCE.

Though Mr. Chamberlain's well-known house near Birmingham is almost unimpressive when compared with the palatial residences of several other prominent statesmen, yet it is rather tasteful in appearance, with its reddish brick and white stone covered by ivy and other creeping plants, its variously-shaped windows, and its sloping gray roof. It is situated in Moor Green, some ten minutes' drive from the centre of the city, and stands in grounds of about seventy acres. Mr. Chamberlain removed to it in 1880 from Edgbaston, after his retirement from business and about the time when he first became a Cabinet Minister. He named it after the North London suburb where he had spent some of his early years.



WHITLOCK.

HIGHBURY, MR. CHAMBERLAIN'S RESIDENCE



tained few distinctive maledictions for "Buckshot Forster" and "Judas Chamberlain."

The note of warning sounded by Lord Beaconsfield as to the condition of Ireland had been derided by the Liberals as mere electioneering *blague* and the "air of Asiatic mystery" in which the prophecy was enveloped prevented it from being taken quite seriously by Conservatives. Yet, to careful observers on the spot, the state of the country, when Mr. Gladstone obtained Office in 1880, was giving the gravest disquietude. Outwardly, the appearance was somewhat more pacific than it had been for a few years before. The two distinct movements—one for political separation, the other for confiscation of the landlords' property—had assumed a colourable moderation in the shape of Home Rule and Land Reform. As presented for discussion in England, there was little in either demand that might not fairly be considered by any Advanced Radical. The two agitations, which had hitherto been worked for separate objects and largely by distinct sets of persons, were now brought together by "that genius Parnell," as Lord Salisbury called him.

The mere combination of the two Programmes was, however, no great feat of leadership. As the landlords were, practically, the English garrison in Ireland, the Fenian and the Farmer obviously had an equal interest in making the country too hot to hold them. And it was but rudimentary deception for the Irish Party to pretend in England that they were only asking for Local Self-Government and an extension of Tenants' Right. If Mr. Parnell had done no more than this he would not have earned Lord Salisbury's sinister commendation. His original and audacious project was to associate these "open," and more or less Constitutional, movements with the treasonable conspiracy of the Physical Force Party in Ireland and America. To carry out his purpose—partly ambitious but chiefly patriotic—he must have command of votes at home and plenty of money from abroad. The votes he got from



the Irish farmers, by promising them the freehold of the soil (or something very like it) and persuading them that he was really working for the enfranchisement of the land. The money of the Clan-na-Gael was extracted by denouncing British rule on American platforms, and by promising to destroy the Union between Great Britain and Ireland. This double game Mr. Parnell played for some years, and with astonishing success, when it is remembered that he had to play it in public. His American speeches were read in Ireland, his Irish speeches in America, and both in England. Yet not only did he manage to humour both elements in his own following, but he also contrived to find believers and allies in this country—not exclusively among the Radicals.

The first important step was taken in June 1879, when he appeared at Westport on the same platform as Mr. Davitt, the Fenian, who had recently been released on ticket-of-leave. The Land Act of 1870 had been a failure, he said, since it left landlords the power of eviction in cases of non-payment of rent. They must ultimately be bought out. Meantime, the tenants should pay no more than fair rents, and keep a firm grip of their homesteads and farms. They must not rely entirely on their Parliamentary Representatives—God helped those who helped themselves.

In October, the Land League was formally brought into operation. The objects announced were, on the face of them, approximately legitimate: to reduce rack rents and enable cultivators to become owners of the soil; to defend tenants threatened with eviction; to work the Bright Clauses in the Land Act; and to invest the tenant with the freehold, after payment of a fair rent for a certain term of years. In view of the agricultural depression then prevailing in Ireland, it was resolved that Mr. Parnell should visit the United States, and solicit subscriptions for the starving peasantry. It was soon found that a merely philanthropic appeal would not bring in the dollars, and

Mr. Parnell explained that the Land League, of which he was the moving spirit, did not conflict with "any higher national aspiration for the complete redemption of Ireland." This was good, so far as it went. But something more was necessary. Mr. Parnell, as a Member of Parliament, and leader of a Constitutional agitation, was open to suspicion. Early in 1880 he repudiated the charge of undue legality, and pointed out that a successful revolutionary movement must have both an open and a secret side. He would not himself belong to an unlawful association, but would co-operate with one. On 20th February he declared, on behalf of his Party at Westminster, that none of them would be satisfied until they had broken the last link that bound Ireland to England. On his return home a banquet was held in his honour, nor did he offer any protest when Mr. Biggar expressed the belief, if Constitutional measures should fail to win the rights of Ireland, that she would "produce another Hartmann, and probably with better results"—Hartmann having just been arrested on the charge of attempting to blow up the Czar in the Winter Palace.

The new Parliament had scarcely assembled in 1880, when the Irish Party started on the policy—in which they had the active support of a Radical group at Westminster—of "squeezing" Mr. Gladstone. It had been understood that the Session of 1881 should be set apart for an Irish Land Bill, but the Nationalists insisted upon an immediate instalment. Ministers must find time for a Bill to suspend evictions. Clearly this would derange the Government Programme; besides, as Mr. Forster bluntly declared, it would mean a Bill to suspend the Payment of Rent. Nevertheless, the Irish Party in the end had their way: partly through their own capacity for making themselves a nuisance in Parliament, and partly through the support of Mr. Bright and Mr. Chamberlain within the Cabinet. Ministers announced, just before Midsummer, that they had accepted the principle of the Nationalist proposal, and

had incorporated it in their scheme for the relief of distress in Ireland. The operation of the "Compensation for Disturbance" Bill was to be limited to the end of 1881, by which date it was hoped that the contemplated Land Bill would come into force.

Its object was, almost avowedly, to smooth the way for the comprehensive Measure of the ensuing Session, and to keep the Nationalists quiet in the House of Commons. There might be excellent reasons why the Liberals should vote for it. But these had no influence with the Peers, Irish landlords dreaded, and English landlords disliked, what they knew would be the leading features of Mr. Gladstone's promised legislation; nor had they any desire to make things easy for him at Westminster. Accordingly, the House of Lords rejected the Bill by a majority of 5 to 1 (252 against 51). On the surface, the Bill was not unfair. It gave relief only to tenants who had been prevented from paying their rent by the badness of the seasons, who were willing to continue their occupation on reasonable terms, and whose landlords had refused such terms. Granted that the legislation which Ministers were known to intend was necessary, the preliminary Measure would not be inequitable. But as the Peers refused to accept that hypothesis they might well be excused for rejecting the deduction. If a pitched battle had to be fought in 1881, why should they abandon their outpost in 1880?

The Radicals, of course, made the most of this opening. Both at the time and afterwards, when a state of something like Civil War had arisen in Ireland, they attributed all the trouble to the rejection of the Compensation for Disturbance Bill. They forgot that the Land Bill afterwards presented contained limitations which destroyed its virtue in the eyes of the Irish Agrarians, and that when it came up for Third Reading in the Commons Mr. Parnell and his immediate following had walked out of the House. Mr. Gladstone, no doubt, had attached importance to the Land

Bill, and so had Mr. Chamberlain. Probably they believed that, though it did not satisfy the Irish members, it would, nevertheless, placate the tenants:

"You will recollect," said Mr. Chamberlain, "the solemn warning which Mr. Gladstone addressed to us in reference to the state of affairs. He said, 'Ireland stands within measurable distance of Civil War,' and he urged that this Bill (Compensation for Disturbance) should be accepted as, in the opinion of the Government, necessary to strengthen their hands, and to enable them to secure obedience to Law and Order. The warning was neglected—the House of Lords rejected the Bill, and I say, never in the history of that House has it committed a more unwise and a more unpatriotic act. If that Bill had been passed, we have the assurance of the Leaders of the Irish Land League themselves that they could not have successfully continued their agitation. The Bill was rejected, and Civil War has begun. Class is arrayed against class in social strife, and now 30,000 soldiers and 12,000 policemen are barely sufficient to enable the Government to protect the lives and the property of the Queen's subjects in Ireland."

Whether the Bill, if passed, would have done good in Ireland, it is impossible to say. Certainly the rejection of it was not the cause of the disorder. This had begun before the Bill was proposed or thought of. Months before, the agitation against rent had been started, the Land League had been organised, and the Fenians had been at work—witness the raid on the *Juno*, when forty cases of fire-arms were carried off. This enterprise had been formally condemned by the Cork Branch of the Land League, whereupon Mr. Brennan and Mr. Dillon had suggested that it would be well if the Cork people were to mind their own business. The rebuke was dutifully taken to heart, and the offending Resolution was cancelled. The practice of Boycotting had not merely been condoned, it had been expounded and enjoined, by Mr. Parnell:

“What,” he asked, “are you to do with a tenant who bids for a farm from which his neighbour has been evicted? (‘Kill him!’ ‘Shoot him!’) Now, I think I heard somebody say, ‘Shoot him!’ (‘Shoot him!’) I wish to point out a very much better way—a more Christian and charitable way—which will give the lost sinner an opportunity of repenting. (‘Hear, hear!’) When a man takes a farm from which another has been evicted, you must show him on the roadside when you meet him, you must show him in the streets of the town, you must show him at the shop-counter, you must show him in the fair and in the market-place, and even in the place of worship—by leaving him severely alone, by putting him into a moral Coventry, by isolating him from his kind as a leper of old—you must show him your detestation of the crime he has committed; and you may depend upon it, if the population of a county in Ireland carry out this doctrine, that there will be no man so full of avarice, so lost to sense of shame, as to dare the public opinion of all right-thinking men within the county, and to transgress your unwritten code of laws.”

The truth was that Mr. Gladstone was growing tired of Mr. Parnell and his incessant Parliamentary menace—convinced, also, that the agitation in rural Ireland could only be controlled by strong measures. There was little doubt that the Coercionists in the Government were getting the upper hand, and the “Birmingham Members of the Cabinet,” as Lord Salisbury pleasantly called them, had to make their choice between resigning and acquiescing in exceptional action against disorder. It was even rumoured that Mr. Bright was weakening in his belief that “Force was no remedy.” As Lord Salisbury pointed out, that was not the opinion of the Land League. Every day it was bringing new districts under its control—if necessary, by assassination, but more generally by torment and torture, cruelty, and destruction of property. Mr. Chamberlain had asked why it was that Order had been maintained under a Conservative regime, but Anarchy had

broken out as soon as the Liberals came into office. Lord Salisbury's reply was that the Irish were demoralised by "the electioneering habits of the Liberal Party."

"Crime and outrage," he had said on another occasion, "though very disagreeable to those who live in the midst of them, have a Parliamentary value. A Land Bill, especially if it contained confiscatory clauses, would fall very flat if there were no disturbances in Ireland. The longer the disturbance continues, the fiercer it becomes, and the more cause there would seem to be for exceptional legislation next Session; and if there are members of the Government—as I suspect there are—who have some pet project, some darling theory, to promote, they will wish for that state of things which will furnish the argument that will best establish their theories. On the other hand, if the landlords are delivered over for the winter to the tender mercies of the Land League, it may be hoped they will be more pliable next Spring, and will offer their fleeces more readily to the shearer who may desire to shear them. In other words, the present state of Ireland, all the Anarchy, and all the crime committed in that country, are so many arguments for future legislation. Every person who is shot, or wounded, or carded, or tarred and feathered, contributes to bring revolutionary principles with regard to the land of Ireland within the range of practical politics. He will act on Mr. Gladstone's mind with the same effect as the Clerkenwell outrage."

Though these taunts and others like them, bitter and effective as they were, would not have moved the Radicals from their policy if Mr. Gladstone had stood firm, he perceived that the opinion of the country—already irritated by events abroad—was turning against him: he had, besides, a strong hatred of the more violent forms of illegality. On 25th September matters were brought pretty well to a head by the murder of Lord Mountmorres—not the worst instance in a series of deliberate assassinations. Not only were such crimes frequent, but they

were committed with the sympathy, probably with the complicity, of the people amongst whom the victims resided. It was impossible to obtain convictions, or even to collect evidence. Before the end of October, criminal informations had been filed against Mr. Parnell, Mr. Dillon, Mr. Biggar, and other leaders of the Land League, and in the following month it was announced in the City by Mr. Gladstone—amid general applause—that the Law must be enforced in Ireland before any relief could be granted to the farmers. To this he made the significant addition that, if the existing facilities at the disposal of the authorities were not sufficient, Parliament would be asked to entrust the Government with fresh powers.

This was an absolute repudiation of the whole Radical position. Naturally, it was resisted in the Cabinet by Mr. Chamberlain—who was on fairly intimate terms with Mr. Justin M'Carthy and other moderate members of the Home Rule Party. The meetings of the Cabinet in November—the usual time for settling the business of the ensuing Session—were so numerous and protracted that rumours went about that a Ministerial crisis was impending. Mr. Chamberlain, however, gave way. Had he at this time withdrawn from the Cabinet on such a question, he would probably have received little support in the country, except, perhaps, in his own district. The Nationalists made it very difficult for an English politician to stand by them. Such order as was kept in Ireland was kept by military force. It required 7000 men to overawe the rioters while a party of friendly Orangemen, imported from Ulster, were engaged in getting the harvest on Captain Bovcott's estate.

The Coercionist proposals of the Government, explained on the meeting of Parliament, 7th January 1881, were embodied in two Measures. The Preservation of Peace Bill rendered the possession of arms within any "Proclaimed District" a punishable offence. The Pro-

tection of Life and Property Bill claimed the most arbitrary power ever demanded by a modern English Ministry. It authorised the Lord-Lieutenant to issue a warrant for the arrest of any person whom he might "reasonably suspect" of any treasonable or agrarian offence. Such a person must be treated as an unconvicted person, but might be kept in custody till 30th September of 1882, without being brought to trial. It was in this way that Mr. Forster hoped to lay his hand on those "village tyrants" who practised outrage and intimidation with impunity, because they knew that nobody dared to give evidence against them. "If I had thought," he said, "that this duty would devolve on an Irish Secretary, I would never have held the office; if I could have foreseen that this would be the end of twenty years of Parliamentary life, I would have left Parliament rather than undertake it." If Mr. Forster showed so much repugnance in making this proposal, what must have been the feelings of his Radical colleagues in acceding to it? It was noticed that the hostile Amendment to the Address, which was moved by Mr. Parnell, was supported in the lobby by eight of the English Radicals most closely associated with Mr. Chamberlain and Sir Charles Dilke. Neither of them spoke on the Bill, but Mr. Bright surprised the House by delivering an impassioned defence of it. He had always voted against coercive Measures in the past, because he did not believe them to be necessary. This Measure he did consider necessary—he trusted Mr. Forster, and the law of the Land League had superseded the law of Parliament. Other coercive Bills had not been accompanied by remedial measures: this was to be followed by a wide scheme of agrarian reform.

The difficulty of accepting the Bill may have been mitigated to Mr. Chamberlain by the unprecedented Obstruction practised by the Irish members in opposing it. A Debate of forty-one hours was only brought to an end by Speaker Brand resorting to a *coup* of somewhat



doubtful legality. Mr. Chamberlain has always attached a possibly exaggerated importance to the efficiency of Parliamentary Institutions, and regards it as almost a sacred principle that the will of the majority shall prevail. He was especially irritated by the Nationalist tactics, because they prolonged a controversy which placed him in a very awkward position, and postponed the discussion of the Land Bill which, along with many other Liberals, he considered a Message of Peace to Ireland. Not unnaturally, the exasperated Conservatives declared that the Irish deserved no favour from the Parliament which they had defied and insulted. Why not drop the Land Bill, and have done with them? Mr. Chamberlain repudiated such counsels:—

“What is to be done now? Well, the Tories have no doubt whatever as to the course which we ought to pursue. By the mouths of their Leaders, by their organs in the Press, they urge upon the Government to put aside at once the Land Bill, to give up any attempt at remedial legislation, and to go to Parliament for more and more Coercion, for the abolition of trial by jury, for the suppression of the Land League, and for other stringent and arbitrary Measures. Well now, for my part, I hate Coercion. I hate the name and I hate the thing. I am bound to say that I believe there is not one of my colleagues who does not hate it as I do. But then we hate disorder more. It seems to me that the issue is now with the Irish people and those who lead them. They can have no doubt any longer. It might have been possible before; they can have no doubt any longer as to the intentions of the Government. We have brought in a Land Bill. We have offered our Message of Peace to the Irish people.

. . . . .

“I do not say that it may not be susceptible of amendment, but I say that, as it stands, and, speaking generally of its main provisions, it has been welcomed by the major-

ity of the Irish Press. It has been frankly accepted as satisfactory by the whole of Ulster. It has been approved—I am always speaking of its main proposals—it has been approved by the Roman Catholic clergy.”

Virtually, the Measure of which Mr. Gladstone and his colleagues had formed such high hopes was an enactment of the “Three F’s” (Fair Rent, Fixity of Tenure, and Free Sale), and was based, in some respects, on the Reports of the Richmond and Bessborough Commissions. Briefly, the Fair Rents were to be settled by a special tribunal, the Land Commission—the argument put forward being that in Ireland there was no such thing as free contract between landlord and tenant. Fixity of Tenure was defended as a necessary consequence—it would be no good to settle a Fair Rent if the landlord were able to determine the tenancy at pleasure. The tenant, therefore, was to be secured for a period of fifteen years, during which his rent could not be raised, nor could he be evicted, except for nonpayment of rent, or the breach of certain specified covenants. The Free Sale was based on the custom of Tenant Right, which already existed in certain parts of the country: it was now legalised, rendered universal, and considerably enlarged. It was made to consist of two elements—the value of the tenant’s “unexhausted improvements” and of the “goodwill of the farm.” Besides these three essential features, the Bill contained a number of clauses dealing with Compensation for Disturbance, the Reclamation of Waste Lands, Emigration, and Land Purchase.

A generous measure of Reform, said the complacent Liberals! A policy of sheer confiscation, cried the landlords indignantly! A miserable dole, grumbled Mr. Parnell! It must be radically altered before it could be accepted by his Party. As it stood, he would not compromise himself by voting for the Third Reading. The Liberals were equally astonished and disgusted by the attitude of the Nationalists, and nobody was more incensed

than Mr. Chamberlain. They were not in earnest about social reform, he declared in a platform speech:—

“There is no secret about what I am going to say. There is no dispute about it. Mr. Parnell and those who follow him have never concealed the fact that their chief object is not the removal of grievances in Ireland, but the separation of Ireland from England. Why, only a few months ago Mr. Parnell, speaking in Ireland, said that he would never have joined the Land League, he would have taken no part in this great agitation which has been called into existence to redeem the Irish people from the consequences of centuries of wrong—he would have taken no part in that agitation if he had not thought it would have helped him in the Nationalist and Separatist movement in which he chiefly takes an interest. How can we satisfy these men? Our object is not the same as theirs; we want to remove every just cause of grievance. They want to magnify grievances and to intensify differences. We want to unite the Irish people and the English and the Scotch in bonds of amity. We want, I say, to bind the Irish people to this country in bonds of amity and cordial union, just as much as Scotland is united to England—although the time was when Scotchmen felt as bitter a hostility to the Union as Irishmen now profess to feel. Well, under these circumstances, I find that the gentlemen to whom I have referred do not openly oppose the Land Bill, because, I believe, they are well aware that their constituents would not justify them in such a course. But they are not unwilling to put obstacles in its way. They are not unwilling to raise Motions for Adjournment, or to put questions which lead to Debate, and which take up the precious time of the House, which ought to be expended solely in the promotion of this Measure; and, above all, they try by agitation to force upon the Government impossible concessions, the effect of which, if only we were to accept them, they know would be that the Bill would very likely be rejected by the House of Com-

mons, and would certainly be rejected by the House of Peers."

Mr. Chamberlain went further than this. He admitted there might be dishonest tenants as well as grasping landlords, that the right to receive a fair and moderate rent was "as much his property as a man's coat or his money," and that the power of eviction must be retained as the only means of exacting a just debt.

In spite of Nationalist ingratitude, and Conservative opposition, Mr. Gladstone's Bill was passed without any fundamental alteration in either House of Parliament. If the Government still hoped to pacify Ireland, they had made a great miscalculation. No sooner had Parliament risen than the Nationalist members set themselves to foment disorder. The South and West of Ireland were given over to a No Rent agitation. Mr. Gladstone delivered at Leeds a dignified rebuke to the Irish Leader. Mr. Parnell desired to stand, as Aaron stood, between the living and the dead; but to stand, not, as Aaron stood, to arrest, but to spread, the plague! Mr. Parnell replied, at Wexford, that Mr. Gladstone's language was unscrupulous and dishonest! Evidently, it was no good to argue any longer with a politician so lost to all sense of decency. He was "reasonably suspected" of treasonable practices, and taken to Kilmainham Prison, where he was presently joined by most of his chief colleagues. The reply of the Land League was issued on 18th October, in the shape of a Manifesto enjoining the tenants to pay no rent until the prisoners should be released. On the 20th the Land League itself was proclaimed as an illegal body. In theory it ceased to exist, but for financial purposes it survived in the Ladies' Land League, and for all practical purposes the Proclamation was a dead letter.

So far, it must be confessed, the Irish policy of the Government had been a failure. They had, indeed, carried their Bills, but the Law was openly defied over the greater part of the country, and the leaders of the people

were only kept in order by being placed under lock and key. It was under these dispiriting circumstances that Mr. Chamberlain went to Liverpool at the end of October, and attempted a general defence of Ministers' treatment of Ireland. It was too much, he said, to expect that "the tardy and incomplete reparation of later years" would at once efface the bitter memories lingering in thousands of Irish cabins. The Peers were once again reminded of their mischievous action in rejecting the Compensation for Disturbance Bill. But the Nationalist Leaders were much to blame because, if they did not countenance, they did at least permit, a system of terrorism which no civilised Government could tolerate. It had been necessary to suppress the Land League—though its ostensible object, the reform of unjust laws, was approved by the Government. But, instead of seeking to remove grievances, it was inflaming them. It was doing its best to make the Land Act a failure. The real object of the agrarian movement was to promote the cause of Irish Independence. The Government were bound to interfere unless they were ready to face the prospect of Separation. He could not himself contemplate the establishment of a hostile Power within striking distance of England. Probably it would lead to Civil War. At the best, the two countries would be a standing menace to each other: the Naval and Military expenditure would become intolerable. In the end Ireland would have to be reconquered, or England would be ruined. He said to Ireland what the Northern States in America had said to the Southern—"The Union must be preserved." If that condition were observed there was nothing which Irishmen might not ask and hope to obtain—equal laws, equal justice, and equal prosperity. Their interests and even their prejudices should be respected. But Nature had forged indissoluble links, which could not be sundered without causing misery and ruin to both countries. To keep them intact, all the resources of the Empire would be put into force.

The speech is important because it marks distinctly the point beyond which Mr. Chamberlain was resolved not to advance in his extreme concession to Irish opinion. He was unalterably opposed to Separation of the two Kingdoms—and, presumably, to the institution of an Independent Parliament in Dublin. But there was, on the other hand, no repudiation, express or implied, of any Home Rule demand that stopped short of Separation.

As for Coercion—which was the one urgent topic of the day—though Mr. Chamberlain spoke of it as necessary, it is by no means clear that in his own mind he was convinced of its virtue. On so essential a question of policy he could not separate himself from his colleagues, but his apology, though it may have been sincere, was not very spirited. Evidently he had no heart in a system which his brother Radical, Mr. Joseph Cowen, described as “a despotism as remorseless as was operating in Moscow.”

But how was it working? When Parliament met in February 1882, the Government alluded, in the Queen's Speech, to certain “signs of improvement,” and for some months longer they adhered to their policy. Yet moonlighting, intimidation, and Boycotting were practised all over the South and West; arms were imported without much apparent difficulty; murders were not infrequent, attempts at murder were everyday occurrences; the Land League was at work under a new name, though seven hundred persons were being kept in prison without trial. Presumably they had been selected as the most formidable agents of disorder. Yet while they were in seclusion the mischief went on as merrily as if they were still at large. The legal power under which they were detained would expire at the end of September. As for putting the “suspects” on their trial, there would be no chance of getting a conviction. Such were some of the arguments that Mr. Chamberlain was urging against the Coercionist system

with which he was unwillingly associated. Why not try what could be done by way of bargain and arrangement? It was known that to Mr. Parnell personally confinement was specially irksome, and in order to hasten his release by a few months he might be willing to yield some substantial consideration.

Persistently pressed, not only by Mr. Chamberlain, these views at length prevailed with Mr. Gladstone. This was the origin of the negotiations that resulted in the "Treaty of Kilmainham." Mr. Forster had no alternative to suggest except that of going to Parliament for still more stringent powers of repression—a course which the Prime Minister disliked, and which, he thought, might involve the resignation of Mr. Bright as well as Mr. Chamberlain. Apart from their own disbelief in coercive legislation, they had to contend against the incessant pressure applied by their Radical supporters and associates, and their position was becoming both anomalous and uncomfortable.

It is said, and probably it is true, that the first overtures proceeded from Mr. Parnell. However that may have been, it is certain that for some little time the go-betweens had been busy, and the political quidnuncs wagged their heads sagaciously when it was announced that Mr. Parnell had been released from prison. The explanation offered was that he had suffered a family bereavement, and had been allowed to go out on parole, in order to attend the funeral of his relative in Paris. That he had other business to transact in that Capital has since been ascertained, but the parole part of the story was confirmed by his return to Kilmainham on the 24th. That Mr. Forster altogether disapproved of the negotiations then in progress is as certain as that he was informed beforehand that they would be commenced. His consent as Chief Secretary was necessary, in order that the prisoner might in the first instance be set at large. Again, a confidential letter to Mr. Gladstone, quoted by Sir T. Wemyss

Reid,<sup>1</sup> shows that he agreed, though only on certain conditions, to the release of the prisoners. "They must give an assurance that they would not, in any way, attempt to intimidate men into obedience to their unwritten law." Without such an undertaking, matters would only be made worse—unless the country became so quiet that "Parnell and Co." could do no harm, or unless an Act were passed so strong that it would be possible to govern the country in defiance of them. It is also clear, from Mr. Forster's subsequent intervention in the debate on the "Treaty of Kilmainham," that he had been kept informed of the various stages in the transaction.

It is still impossible to give a full account of the transactions, as Mr. Gladstone objected in the House of Commons to the production of documentary evidence. But the general course of the dealings is pretty clear from certain letters which have been published. Three days after his release Mr. Parnell instructed Captain O'Shea, a member of his Party, and husband of the lady who afterwards became Mrs. Parnell, to address Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Chamberlain on the subject of legislation as to Rent Arrears. Captain O'Shea's story was that Mr. Parnell expressed indifference about the treatment of himself and the other suspects. The important thing was to get Ministers to take up the Arrears question. This is not improbable, since, if they adopted Mr. Parnell's policy, and brought in a Bill on his lines, they would be bound to let him and his colleagues out of prison. Captain O'Shea also said that he implored his friend and Leader to use his personal influence for restoring order in Ireland. If this also was true, we get the basis of a bargain—Captain O'Shea acting as the "honest broker" for both parties. The Government were to be invited to satisfy Mr. Parnell on the Arrears question, and Mr. Parnell to oblige the Government by giving the word for disorder to come to an end. However that may have been, Captain

<sup>1</sup> *Life of the Rt. Hon. W. E. Forster.*



O'Shea did write both to Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Chamberlain on 13th April. The Prime Minister's reply was dated two days later:

"I have received your letter of the 13th, and I will communicate with Mr. Forster on the important and varied matter which it contains. I will not now enter upon any portion of that matter, but will simply say that no apology can be required either for the length or the freedom of your letter. On the contrary, both demand my acknowledgments. I am very sensible of the spirit in which you write, but I think you assume the existence of a spirit on my part with which you can sympathise. Whether there be any agreement as to the means, the end in view is of vast moment, and assuredly no resentment, personal prejudice, or false shame, or other impediment extraneous to the matter itself, will prevent the Government from treading in that path which may most safely lead to the pacification of Ireland."

Mr. Chamberlain's answer was dated the 17th:

"I am really very much obliged to you for your letter, and especially for the copy of your very important and interesting communication to Mr. Gladstone. I am not in a position, as you will understand, to write you fully on the subject, but I think I may say that there appears to me nothing in your proposal which does not deserve consideration. I entirely agree in your view that it is the duty of the Government to lose no opportunity of acquainting themselves with representative opinion in Ireland, and for that purpose that we ought to welcome suggestion and criticism from every quarter and from all sections and classes of Irishmen, provided that they are animated by a desire for good government, and not by a blind hatred of all government whatever. There is one thing must be borne in mind—that if the Government and the Liberal Party generally are bound to show greater consideration than they have hitherto done for Irish opinion, on the other hand the leaders of the Irish Party must pay some attention to public opinion in England and in Scotland. Since the present Government have been in office they have not had the slightest assistance in this direction. On the contrary, some of the Irish members have acted as if their object were to embitter and prejudice the English nation. The result is, that nothing would be easier than at the present moment to get up in every large town an anti-Irish agitation, almost as formidable as the anti-Jewish agitation in Russia. I fail to see how Irishmen or Ireland can profit by such policy, and I shall rejoice whenever the time comes that a more hopeful spirit is manifested on both sides "

Captain O'Shea was less successful in his dealings with

Mr. Forster. Though numerous interviews were held, the Chief Secretary held to his opinion that no terms could be arranged, but he gave him practically free access to the "suspects" in Kilmainham.

It should here be mentioned that separate negotiations were being conducted, though with the same object, through Mr. Justin M'Carthy, who acted as intermediary between Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. Parnell. In this case also a definite understanding was arrived at, and was embodied in a letter from Mr. Parnell to Mr. M'Carthy, dated 30th April. This letter (which for some reason Mr. Gladstone was unwilling to produce) lays down practically the same stipulations on the Arrears and other Agrarian questions as Mr. Parnell's letter of the 30th, which was read out in the House of Commons. The difference is that the earlier letter does not contain that undertaking by Mr. Parnell (to co-operate cordially with the Liberal Party) which caused and invited so much unfavourable comment. If it be granted that Mr. Gladstone was justified in coming to terms with Mr. Parnell, and that it was becoming to harter an Arrears Bill for Nationalist help in stopping outrages, the arrangement outlined in the letter to Mr. M'Carthy was perfectly unexceptionable. The offensive element in the bargain was that Ministers should have sought to buy over the Irish vote—only a few months after the Nationalist Party had formally resolved to take their places on the Opposition side of the House. Naturally, the Conservatives made the most of this "corrupt" understanding, and their advantage was increased by the absurd attempts to conceal the arrangement. The text of this letter is given below, and it will be seen that the opening sentence refers to the document which is in Mr. M'Carthy's possession. The clause printed in *italics* is the one that gave rise to most of the controversy.

"I was very sorry that you had left Albert Mansions before I reached London from Eltham, as I had wished to tell you that, after our conversation, I had made up my

mind that it would be proper for me to put Mr. M'Carthy in possession of the views which I had previously communicated to you. I desire to impress upon you the absolute necessity of a settlement of the Arrears question which will leave no recurring sore connected with it behind, and which will enable us to show the smaller tenantry that they have been treated with justice and some generosity. The proposal you have described to me, as suggested in some quarters, of making a Loan, over however many years the payment might be spread, should be absolutely rejected, for reasons which I have already fully explained to you. If the Arrears question be settled upon the lines indicated by us, I have every confidence—a confidence shared by my colleagues—that the exertions which we should be able to make strenuously, and unremittingly, would be effective in stopping outrages and intimidation of all kinds. As regards permanent legislation of an ameliorative character, I may say that the views which you always shared with me, as to the admission of leaseholders to the Fair-Rent Clauses of the Act, are more confirmed than ever. So long as the flower of the Irish peasantry are kept outside the Act, there cannot be any permanent settlement of the Land question, which we all so much desire. I should also strongly hope that some compromise might be arrived at, this Session, with regard to the amendment of the tenure clauses. It is unnecessary for me to dwell upon the enormous advantage to be derived from the full extension of the Purchase Clauses, which now seem practically to have been adopted by all parties. The accomplishment of the programme I have sketched out to you would, in my judgment, be regarded by the country as a practical settlement of the Land Question, *and would, I feel sure, enable us to co-operate cordially for the future with the Liberal Party in forwarding Liberal principles and measures of general reform*; and I believe that the Government at the end of this Session would, from the state of the country, feel themselves

thoroughly justified in dispensing with further coercive measures."

On the same day as this letter was, or purported to be, written, Captain O'Shea saw Mr. Forster, who made a memorandum of the conversation, of which he gave the following account in the House of Commons.

"After telling me that he had been from eleven to five yesterday with Parnell, O'Shea gave me his letter to him, saying that he hoped it would be a satisfactory expression of union with the Liberal Party. After carefully reading it, I said to him, 'Is that all, do you think, that Parnell would be inclined to say?' He said, 'What more do you want? Doubtless, I could supplement.' I said, 'It comes to this—that upon our doing certain things, he will help us to prevent outrages,' or words to that effect. He again said, 'How can I supplement it?' referring, I imagine, to different measures. I did not feel justified in giving him my own opinion, which might be interpreted to be that of the Cabinet, so I said I had better show the letter to Mr. Gladstone, and one or two others. He said, 'Well, there may be faults in expression, but the thing is done; if these words will not do, I must get others; but what is obtained is' (and here he used most remarkable words) 'that the conspiracy, which has been used to get up Boycotting and outrages, will now be used to put them down, and that there will be a union in the Liberal Party.' And as an illustration of how the first of these results was to be obtained, he said that Parnell hoped to make use of a certain person [Sheridan], and get him back from abroad, as he would be able to help him to put down conspiracy or agitation—I am not sure which word was used—as he knew all its details in the West. He was a released suspect, against whom we have for some time had a fresh warrant, and who, under disguises, had hitherto eluded the police, coming backwards and forwards from Egan to the outrage-mongers in the West. I did not feel myself sufficiently master of the situation to let him see what I thought of this confi-

dence, but I again told him that I could not do more at present than tell others what he had told me."

It was this arrangement which Mr. Forster branded as a "disgraceful compromise," and which it is so difficult to reconcile with Mr. Gladstone's explicit declaration that "Mr. Parnell had asked nothing from the Government, and the Government sought nothing from him." In writing to Mr. Forster privately, Mr. Gladstone had referred to Mr. Parnell's promise of support to the Liberal Party as "a *hors d'œuvre* which we had no right to expect." The rough-and-ready explanation, much favoured at the time by indignant Conservatives, is that the Prime Minister told a falsehood! That may be dismissed. The probability is that he really did regard the arrangement as to an Arrears Bill, on the one hand, and the cessation of outrages, on the other, as the substantial part of the "Treaty"—the only part embodied in the letter to Mr. M'Carthy—and that the promise of Nationalist co-operation at Westminster was, what he called it, simply a *hors d'œuvre*, an agreeable supplement, not demanded on his authority, but thoroughly acceptable as a voluntary offering. Mr. Gladstone was, it may be added with all respect to his memory, constitutionally incapable of seeing that there could be anything at all shady in a promise to support his own policy. That was not the sort of thing which, to his mind, required apology or explanation.

Why, then, was the concealment attempted? When Mr. Parnell on 15th May rose in the House of Commons to make an explanation, he was supplied by Captain O'Shea with a copy of the letter which he had addressed to that gentleman. This he read from beginning to end. But in this no reference was made to the Nationalist promise of co-operation with the Liberals. Thereupon Mr. Forster produced another document which he insisted that Captain O'Shea should communicate to the House. Mr. Chamberlain's explanation was that Captain O'Shea had privately asked leave to withdraw that particular

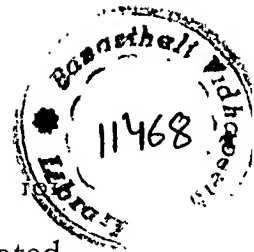
clause, and that he had agreed. The incident, however, was unimportant, and had left, he said, but little impression on his mind.

Naturally, Mr. Chamberlain sought to make light of the whole affair. There can be little doubt that Mr. Parnell, when he gave the pledge, did not intend that it should become public property. The reason was obvious. He had been preaching on a hundred platforms that the Nationalists must be independent of English politicians, and ready to accept from either Party all they could extort, but should give thanks to neither. How would he keep the Republican Brotherhood under control if they could say that his Parliamentary followers were but so many items in Mr. Gladstone's majority. Already the Fenians were becoming restive under the good behaviour which he had induced them to practise by pretending that he too was working for Rebellion, and only waiting for the right moment? What would be the attitude of the Clan-na-Gael when he paid his next visit to America? How could he ask for a subsidy from the "Skirmishing Fund" when he was proved to be no more of a rebel than Mr. Butt had been, or Mr. Shaw?

The letter which had been submitted to the Cabinet was never intended for general publication. Probably it would never have seen the light but for the action of Mr. Forster. The whole bargain—not merely this private clause—was one to which he could not assent. Two days after the date of this letter it was announced that the Chief Secretary had resigned, and that the Lord Lieutenant (Lord Cowper) had gone with him. It was clear that an arrangement which had cost the Government the services of the titular as well as the acting Chief of the Irish Executive would be narrowly scrutinised by Parliament. Mr. Forster was a man of strong feelings, and it was known that, on personal and public grounds, he warmly resented the treatment which he had received from his colleagues. His policy had been discussed at length, it

had been adopted, and, before a fair trial had been given it, he was thrown over. Against Mr. Chamberlain, as the author of his downfall, and as the exponent of a dangerous policy, he was especially incensed. It was not, therefore, likely that he would give quarter when battle should be joined on the floor of the House. If Ministers had only had themselves to consider, they would probably, as sensible men, have made a clean breast of the whole business. It was no such terrible matter—this purchase of Irish votes—provided that the Bill which they promised in return were a fair and reasonable measure. Both Parties had done such things before, and would do them again. It was the puerile deception that did so much damage to Ministers. Either they lost their heads entirely, or they considered themselves bound not to reveal what Mr. Parnell wished to keep secret.

He had, indeed, excellent reason—as he had learned on his recent visit to Paris—for feeling nervous about the Fenians. They had been kept long enough, they thought, at the heel of a Parliamentary Leader. They cared nothing for Land Bills and Arrears Bills; nothing for the progress of the Home Rule cause. So far as they had any feeling on such subjects, they disliked every Measure that would promote contentment in Ireland. With an irrational, but absolutely genuine, hatred of the English race, the Irish National Invincibles, a small group working mostly in the dark, but having their connections with the chiefs of the “open movement,” were resolved to strike a blow at the English Government. It is untrue to suggest that Mr. Parnell, Mr. Dillon, or any of the other Parliamentary leaders were aware beforehand of the plot which was successfully carried out on Saturday evening, 6th May, in the Phoenix Park. Mr. Parnell had been warned—as the Government also had been informed—that mischief was brewing. The murder of Lord Frederick Cavendish and Mr. Burke, hacked to death by surgical knives within sight of the Castle, was but the sequel to a series of pro-



## THE PHOENIX PARK MURDERS

jected attempts on Mr. Forster which had been frustrated only by accident.

The chief purpose of this daring crime was to force Mr. Parnell's hand and to prevent the Irish people from being led further astray into the paths of Constitutional agitation. Against this kind of outrage Mr. Parnell and his Land Leaguers were powerless. They could raise their fingers, and landlord-shooting, rick-burning, boycotting, cattle-maiming, would come to an end. But they had no control over the wilder spirits which they had hoped to use as their agents and instruments. Mr. Parnell was not a truthful man: he felt and professed no scruple about deceiving the "English Parliament," but he spoke from his heart when he expressed, in the House of Commons, his "unqualified detestation" of the crime committed two days before. It had been perpetrated, he said, by men who "absolutely detested the cause with which he had been associated." That crime had been devised and carried out as the "deadliest blow which they had in their power to deal against the hopes of his Party in connection with the new career on which the Government had just entered."

The "new career" which had been contemplated by the Government, but from which they were diverted by the Phoenix Park murders, was, of course, the abandonment of Coercion, signalled by the retirement of Lord Cowper and Mr. Forster. Who was to be the new Chief Secretary? The natural course would, perhaps, have been to select as Mr. Forster's successor the Minister who had been chiefly instrumental in reversing his policy. Mr. Chamberlain did expect—though he declared that he did not desire—that the post would be offered him. Certainly he could not have refused it. If a policy of conciliation was to be recommended, who more suitable for the work than the friend of Mr. Parnell, the intimate associate of several Nationalist members, and (for good or evil) the author of the Treaty of Kilmainham? On the resignation

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of Mr. Forster he went so far—Mr. Justin M'Carthy has recorded—as to send for some of the leading members of the Irish Party, and ask for their advice. Presumably their reply was not unfavourable. But the chance of testing their assurances was never given to Mr. Chamberlain. The post was offered to Sir Charles Dilke, but without a seat on the Cabinet, and on that ground was declined. By Mr. Chamberlain, who was already a member of that body, it would, no doubt, have been accepted.

In a few days, the vacancy was renewed by the murder of Lord Frederick Cavendish—but under what altered circumstances! Generously enough, Mr. Forster volunteered to discharge the duties during any interval that might elapse, but Mr. (now Sir) George Trevelyan was ready to accept the post. There was no more talk of dropping Coercion. On the day of Lord Frederick Cavendish's funeral his successor introduced the Prevention of Crimes Bill. Amongst other stringent provisions it enabled the Lord Lieutenant to order trials for treason, murder, or attempted murder, aggravated violence, and attacks on dwelling-houses to be held before three Judges and without a Jury, though with an appeal to the Court for Criminal Cases Reserved. Another important power was that of holding an inquiry into a crime though the accused had made his escape, and of levying compensation in the district where a murder or maiming had taken place. The only qualifying element in the Bill was that the duration was limited to three years. It was no consolation to the Nationalists that such a Measure—which struck at the very heart of their influence—was accompanied by the promised Arrears Bill. Mr. Dillon repudiated the gift in what Mr. Gladstone called a heart-breaking speech. The idea of co-operation between Liberals and Nationalists was given up as completely as if the "Treaty of Kilmainham" had never been drafted. The Irish set themselves with the best of their will to obstruct the proceedings of the House of Commons,



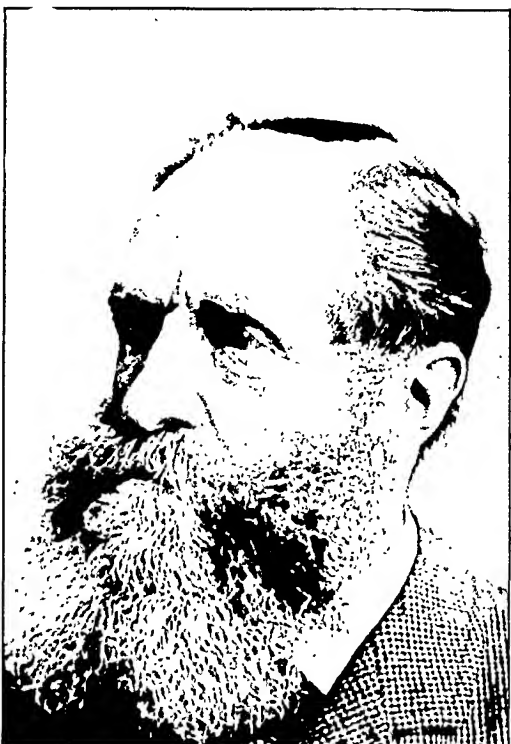
## IRELAND IN THE EIGHTIES

In the Eighties the British ministry had to face a social revolution backed by the Land League in Ireland and by Parnell's resolute Party in the House of Commons. They had to imprison Parnell and some of his chief associates as "suspects". Presently they changed their policy, largely through Mr. Chamberlain's influence; and they thereby lost their Lord-lieutenant, Earl Cowper, and their Chief Secretary, William Edward Forster (1818-86). Their places were taken by John Poyntz Spencer, fifth Earl Spencer (born 1835), and Lord Frederick Charles Cavendish (1836-82), a relation of Mr. Gladstone by marriage. Lord Frederick Cavendish was brutally murdered soon after his arrival in Dublin, and Mr. (now Sir) George Otto Trevelyan succeeded him in order to carry out a strenuous Coercionist policy.

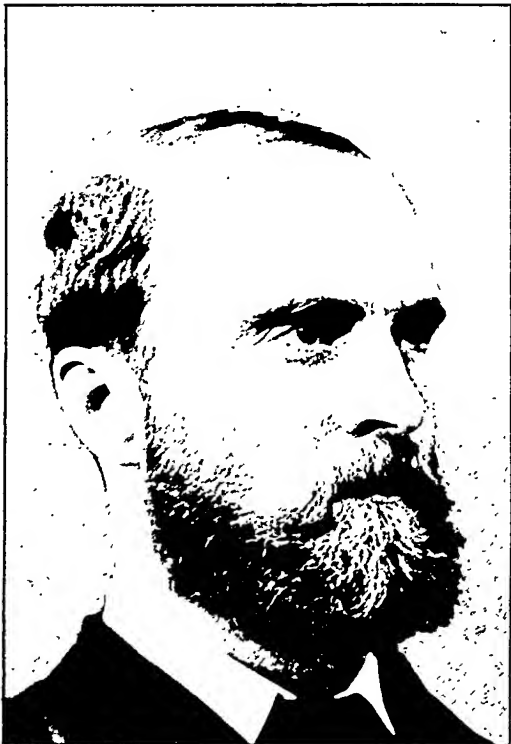
IRELAND IN THE EIGHTIES



*Stereoscopic*  
LORD FREDERICK CAVENDISH



*Stereoscopic*  
EARL SPENCER



CHARLES STEWART PARNELL



*Elliott & Fry*  
RT. HON. W. E. FORSTER



and it must be confessed that they achieved no slight success.

But in Ireland itself the new Executive was working with vigorous efficiency. The exceptional powers given to Lord Spencer and Mr. Trevelyan were administered without fear or favour, and in February 1883, Mr. Chamberlain, though he never seems to have modified his opinions, bore no grudging testimony to the good work of his colleagues. A "qualified peace," he said at Swansea, had been established in Ireland:—

"Peace and order have been restored; crime and outrage have almost ceased. In the meantime, the black conspiracies of murder and violence, which had gathered round the outskirts of the agitation, have been exposed and unmasked, and their authors are being brought to punishment. I say we have the right to claim credit for this success. We have the right to ask that fair-minded opponents shall acknowledge it. But I say that success is due to the fact that, while we have firmly administered the law, we have also recognised the substantial grievances of the Irish people—on which their discontent was founded; and we have made extraordinary efforts to remove those grievances. Without the Land Act, which is the mark of Lord Salisbury's scorn, you would have had no peace, even the qualified peace we have at present in Ireland. Lord Salisbury's moral, which he wished you to draw, is that force is the only remedy. Force is no remedy for discontent—and force alone has never removed the causes of discontent, of which the crime and outrage that we deplore are the extreme and unjustifiable expression."

Not in that way was the Irish problem to be solved. After "eighty years of stormy union" the country was still hostile and unreconciled:—

"Coercion has failed to extort submission. Concession has been powerless to soften her animosity. I do not wonder sometimes that disappointment and even

despair should fill the minds of men when they see the efforts, the unexampled and unremitting efforts, which were made in the last two Sessions by the English Parliament to do justice to Ireland, met by words of menace and insult, and followed by worse than words, by deeds—by disorder, by crimes of violence, and by cowardly assassinations. Every nerve should be strained to detect and to punish the authors of those crimes. But we should blind ourselves to the teachings of our history, and to the experience of every other country, if we did not recognise in the existence of these crimes, and in the unfortunate fact that a large proportion of the population sympathise with those who commit them, an indication of a social condition altogether rotten, which it is the bounden duty of Statesmen to investigate and to reform. There are only two other courses open to you. You may, as some truculent writers have urged, abandon altogether the idea of the Constitutional government of Ireland, and rule the country as a conquered Dependency. How long do you suppose such a state of things would last? How long do you suppose that Englishmen with their free institutions would tolerate the existence of an Irish Poland so near to our own shores? It is too late to speak of such a scheme.

“The other alternative is Separation, which I believe would jeopardise the security of this country, and which I am sure would be fatal to the prosperity and the happiness of Ireland. Well, I reject both alternatives. I contend that both are equally impossible and equally intolerable; but it is to these conclusions that you are inevitably driven if you accept the arguments of those public writers and speakers who have been urging you to abandon hereafter all further conciliation, and have been protesting against, as they say, truckling any more to Irish discontent. I say that as long as there is any just cause for discontent in Ireland, there is still scope for our remedies. Not until we have removed every just cause for

discontent, until we have abolished every grievance, are we entitled to say that, if Irishmen are still dissatisfied, we have at least done our part—the resources of Statesmanship are exhausted. Gentlemen, the present crisis is a test of our faith in Liberal principles. Do not let us be too soon cast down. Centuries of wrong and of oppression have made Ireland what she is. We have no right to expect that a few months, or even a few years, of beneficent legislation will undo the mischief. We cannot take our hands from the plough. Let us go on steadfastly in the path which our great Leader has marked out for us, unmoved by clamour and unshaken by panic. Let us keep on in the even tenor of our way, dictated to us as it is by Liberal principles, and commended to our acceptance by every consideration of justice and of expediency.”

Neither in this nor any other speech delivered in that dark and gloomy period is there any suggestion that Mr. Chamberlain—incurably optimistic—had given up the hope of reconciling Irishmen to the connection with Great Britain. He was prepared to relax the bond—even by conceding what was then known as Home Rule, which, however, would not include an independent Parliament or a separate Executive. But on this subject it was necessary for a Cabinet Minister to keep his mouth closed, lest he should be considered to be expressing the opinion of his colleagues, though Mr. Chamberlain never made any secret of his abstract views on this question, and his remarks, just quoted, on Separation were chiefly intended to mark the point at which he would draw a sharp and impassable line.

Much the same note ran through a speech which he delivered nearly a year later at Newcastle. The policy of the Government, he said, was what it always had been. They would turn neither to the right nor the left: they would not think their work completed till they had won for Irishmen every right and privilege enjoyed



by Englishmen and Scotchmen. Until that had been done, it would be premature to despair of a cordial union between the two countries and of the disappearance of the bitter memories that years of oppression and injustice had stamped on the hearts of the Irish race. The way to promote Separation—which must on no account be contemplated—was to rely on Coercion as the only remedy for Irish discontent.

But in 1884 Englishmen had other things to occupy their minds than the rights and wrongs of Ireland. For a time, though not for long, the Irish question was in abeyance.

## CHAPTER IV

FOREIGN AFFAIRS, 1880-1885

There are few defenders left of the Foreign Policy of Mr. Gladstone's Second Administration. The motives, no doubt, have been misrepresented by excited partisans, but the methods were, admittedly, as unfortunate as the results were deplorable. By the irony of fortune it has turned out that what Ministers themselves regarded as an unhappy entanglement, the British Occupation of Egypt, is their strongest title to favourable remembrance, while their best-intended adventures were most prolific of embarrassment to the country. Nor is it less remarkable that two of Mr. Gladstone's colleagues, the Duke of Devonshire and Mr. Chamberlain, should have been largely instrumental in undoing the errors for which they shared full responsibility with their Chief. Having been brought into power mainly on their denunciation of Lord Beaconsfield's Eastern policy, the new Ministry were expected to reverse it, so far as that could be done without a breach of our national obligations. They took their stand on the Berlin Treaty, and, ignoring the particulars in which Russia was evading that instrument, they demanded a strict fulfilment on the part of Turkey. Lord Granville issued a Circular Note to the Powers, inviting them to unite with Great Britain in putting pressure on the Porte to execute its covenants with regard to Montenegro, Greece, and Armenia. A sort of European Concert was arranged, a series of Collective Notes were addressed to Constantinople, and a Joint Naval Demon-

stration was held off Dulcigno. In the end a certain delimitation of frontiers was agreed upon. Montenegro was satisfied, though not without an outbreak of local hostilities: and Greece was put off with a small instalment of its demands, which it was coerced by its patrons into accepting—as something on account.

Just as Russia had taken its revenge upon us, for having arrested its advance on Constantinople, by embroiling us in Afghanistan, so did the Sultan retaliate on the Gladstone Ministry, for the further dismemberment of his Empire, by making trouble for us in Egypt. Lord Salisbury has since confessed that, in backing Turkey against Russia in 1878, we had “put our money on the wrong horse.” The mischief was completed in 1880, when we made an enemy of the Sultan. By alternately offending Russia and Turkey we so arranged our international “book” that in any event we must be losers.

It would be an exaggeration to say that the Porte originated the rebellion of Arabi; but the Khedive, Tewfik Pasha, was well aware that his Suzerain favoured the so-called “Nationalist rising” which aimed at releasing Egypt from the uncertain hold of the Anglo-French Condominium. At that time the Egyptian Viceroy stood in somewhat close relations with the Sultan, and his authority was largely dependent on Turkish Pashas. When the Arabi movement first showed its head, the behaviour of Tewfik was something more than vacillating. Nor can his hesitation be made a matter of censure. He had no reason for believing that the Condominium would interfere by force to protect him from his Army—he believed, as Prince Bismarck believed, that England and France would either paralyse each other’s action by mutual jealousy, or else come into open conflict. By one of the accidents which have built up the British Empire, it happened at the critical moment that M. Gambetta resigned office, and France was deprived of a Statesman who undoubtedly would have maintained its position in the Valley of the Nile.

His successor, M. de Freycinet, was an equally able but less confident politician. He was ready to join in a Naval Demonstration, but the French ironclads were on no account to go into action! For this timidity of purpose he has been much blamed by his countrymen, but he may have had excellent reasons for not relying on the apparent benevolence of Germany, and was by no means anxious to lock up a good part of the French fleet in operations of secondary importance. The hesitation of the two Powers was, of course, an encouragement to Arabi. He proceeded to excesses that called for prompt action, and engaged himself in fortifying Alexandria against the British fleet lying off the shore. On being ordered by Sir Beauchamp Seymour (Lord Alcester) to desist, he fired the first shot by way of defiance. Thus, on 11th July 1882, began the bombardment of Alexandria, and it was continued next day until Arabi took to flight. That the British Government had never contemplated operations on any large scale was shown by the fact that Seymour's ammunition had been exhausted in silencing the Egyptian forts, and that he had no force available for a sufficient landing party. But for this happy improvidence, the incident might have terminated in the summary occupation of Alexandria, and in the restoration of the Condominium. It became necessary, however, to follow up the naval operations with a military expedition, and on 24th July the Prime Minister moved a vote of credit for £2,300,000, and Sir Garnet Wolseley was sent out on the momentous little war that ended in the victory of Tel-el-Kebir.

This, however, was more than Mr. Bright could stand. The Prime Minister had tried to make things easy for the conscience of his Quaker colleague by speaking of "military operations" for the "restoration of civil order," but the kindly subterfuge was unavailing, and Mr. Bright resigned. He was succeeded at the Duchy of Lancaster by Mr. Dodson (Lord Monk Bretton), a Liberal of the official type, whose translation from the Local Government

Contingency, to move from Jhansi to Punear twelve miles from Gwalior, where fifteen years before a British force had routed the Mahrattas. At Punear Major Orr held the Bombay road and was well placed for cutting off the retreat of the rebels. He ordered Brigadier Smith to advance from Sipree by the Jhansi road to Kotah-Ke-Serai, about seven miles to the east of Gwalior. To complete the investment from the south-east and north, he sent instructions to Colonel Riddell to move with the column by the Agra and Gwalior road to the Residency, about seven miles to the north of Gwalior. But the instructions never reached him. Sir Hugh Rose trusted that all the columns of operations would be at their posts by the 19th of June. He himself would advance from the east, because with great trouble he had ascertained that this was the weakest side of Gwalior, and consequently the best for an attack. It was commanded by high hills difficult of access, but when these heights were taken he could drive the enemy from slope to slope till he reached a point from whence he could cannonade the Lushker or New City and, covered by the fire of artillery, storm it. He would cut boldly "in two the enemy's whole line consisting of the old city, above which is the Fort and the Lushker or New City." This point of attack had another advantage. "It enabled me to attack Gwalior almost unhurt by the fire of the Fort." It was a fine daring strategical conception.

On the 12th of June, Sir Hugh Rose's column reached Amean and heard that the Bengal troops had arrived to garrison Calpee and that the weakened 2nd Brigade,<sup>(1)</sup> which had been left behind, was only seventeen miles in their rear. After having been joined by the 2nd Brigade, Brigadier-General Robert Napier, who at once assumed command of it, pushed forward, and, on the morning of the 16th of June, after a long march, he reached Bahadurpore, about four or five miles from the cantonment on the Morar. The British Commander directed Captain Abbott with his Hyderabad Cavalry to reconnoitre the cantonment, and he announced that the rebels were in force in front of it. Sir Hugh Rose rode forward, himself and staff, and examined closely the enemy's position. He found that the side of the cantonments fronting the British force was occupied by strong bodies of cavalry and that on their right were guns and a large body of infantry. As he surveyed the cantonments with the roofs of the bungalows rising above the bright green trees, a delicate problem arose in his mind. His force had just finished a long and fatiguing

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(1) The bulk of it remained at Calpee.

it. Both Sir Charles Dilke and Mr. Chamberlain have always cherished a sort of sentimental tenderness towards France—partly because they are well-read in its literature, partly because it is the only great Continental State which maintains Liberal Institutions.

Speaking for himself and his colleagues in March 1883, Mr. Chamberlain assured his constituents that the whole Cabinet deeply regretted what they had thought to be the necessity for interference in Egypt. In 1885, again, at Birmingham, he alluded gently to the "natural sensitiveness" on the part of Frenchmen, and deprecated the strong language used by "irresponsible writers in the Press" on both sides of the Channel. He attached, he said, the greatest possible importance to "the French Alliance." Near neighbours as the two countries were, their continued and cordial friendship was the best guarantee for the happiness of both. He could understand people thinking it would have been better not to go into Egypt at all. Yet it must be remembered that it was the highway to our Indian and Colonial possessions. We could not permit any other Power to step in and annex Egypt—as it would have been annexed if it had been left unoccupied. But, having gone in, should we have proclaimed a Protectorate, or should we have forthwith incorporated it within the British Empire? The Government had shrunk from that course in 1882 because they did not wish to risk the friendship of France. The only thing to do, then, was to remain there until we had restored order, and to come away when that task was accomplished—without having sought or obtained any territorial aggrandisement. Unfortunately, that date was being postponed by French jealousy. After the sacrifices we had made, we could not tolerate the idea of making way for another Power to take up a preponderating position there.

The same line of thought was followed five years later—though with a somewhat different moral. In the interval a good many things had happened. "I am going to

make a confession" (Mr. Chamberlain said at Birmingham on 14th March 1890). "I admit I was one of those—I think my views were shared by the whole Cabinet of Mr. Gladstone—who regretted the necessity for the Occupation of Egypt. I thought that England had so much to do, such enormous obligations and responsibilities, that we might well escape, if we could, this addition to them; and, when the Occupation was forced upon us, I looked forward with an anxiety to an early, it might be even to an immediate, Evacuation. The confession I have to make is that, having seen what are the results of this Occupation, having seen what is the nature of the task we have undertaken, and what progress we have already made towards its accomplishment, I have changed my mind. I say it would be unworthy of this great nation if we did not rise to the full height of our duty, and complete our work before we left the country. We have no right to abandon the duty which has been cast upon us, and the work which already shows so much promise for the advantage of the people with whose destinies we have become involved."

Mr. Bright, then, was by no means singular among Liberals in his condemnation of our Egyptian policy in 1882. But if his objection was merely to the commencement of military operations, how was it that he stayed in the Cabinet while we were fighting the Boers the year before? In that quarter of the world we were engaged in a war of attempted subjugation. Technically, no doubt, we were putting down a rebellion; that, perhaps, is what made the difference to Mr. Bright's mind. Legally, the enemy were British subjects. The Annexation of the Transvaal by Sir Theophilus Shepstone in 1877 had been denounced by most Liberals at the time, by Mr. Chamberlain as well as by Mr. Gladstone, and the latter had expressed sympathy with a nation struggling for its freedom. On such expressions as this—though Mr. Gladstone was, in theory, no longer Leader of the Opposition—the

Boer Leaders had formed the expectation that if he came into power he would restore their Independence. It is impossible to say whether such a project was contemplated by Mr. Gladstone; certainly he had never given any pledge on the subject. Anyhow, he had been led to believe that the Boers would be contented with the gift of the "large and liberal" institutions of Self-Government which were promised in the Queen's Speech in 1880. Retrocession, Lord Kimberley explained in the Upper House, was not to be thought of. It was impossible to say in what calamities it would involve the native races.

That was the crux of the whole position. Having smashed the Zulu power (this, Mr. Chamberlain had always maintained, was a mistake), we left the coloured population at the mercy of the "European settlers." It was necessary, therefore, to retain the natives under the direct government of the Crown, while we gave the Boers full control over their domestic concerns. But they had no mind for a qualified Independence which prevented them from settling the "Native question" in their own way. The Boer Leaders raised the standard of open revolt, and on 30th December the South African Republic was proclaimed by the Triumvirate, Kruger, Joubert, and Pretorius. British troops had been ordered to Natal to crush the insurrection. The Boers, however, decided on aggressive tactics, broke into British territory, and occupied Laing's Nek. Sir George Colley thought it inadvisable to await the reinforcements then on their way, and made an ineffectual attempt on the Boer position. Having occupied Majuba Hill, he was driven from it, and his force cut to pieces. These were "regrettable incidents," though not of first-rate military importance, but they caused indignation and a sense of national shame at home. This, for some reason, Ministers did not realise; they had grown so accustomed to mocking at the extravagances of "Jingo" sentiment—which were, no doubt, sufficiently irritating to responsible Statesmen—that they ignored a genuine out-



burst of patriotic sensibility. The damage to their reputation, however, might have been repaired if they had allowed Sir Evelyn Wood, who was on the spot with sufficient forces, to restore the situation.

In the Queen's Speech of 1881 they had referred to "military measures" for "prompt vindication of Her Majesty's authority." In January, therefore, they meant to fight. But on 8th February Ministers had altered their minds. If the Boers would desist from armed opposition they should receive guarantees for a friendly settlement. On the 21st, it was arranged that Mr. Brand, President of the Orange Free State, should act as intermediary. So elated were the Boers by their victories at Laing's Nek and Majuba that they declined Lord Kimberley's proposals, and offered us an armistice! This was accepted by the British Government, and a Conference was fixed for 21st March. By the Convention of Pretoria we conceded almost everything which the Boers had demanded, except, fortunately, that we stipulated for recognition of the Suzerainty of the Crown, and retained a right of Veto on any Treaty which the South African Republic might arrange with a foreign Power. These reservations, small as they were, did afterwards prove to be of substantial Diplomatic value. At the time, however, they appeared quite derisory; and when the terms were explained in Parliament they were received with general astonishment—and something like disgust. It was the greatest and the most damaging of the mistakes made by the Gladstone Ministry. Mr. Chamberlain's defence was as good as any other. It did, at least, go into detail, and avoided mere moral platitudes.

"This settlement" (he said at Birmingham on 7th June 1881) "has been the object of violent attack in the House of Peers. You have been told that it constitutes a dismemberment of the Empire, that it is a national surrender; you have been told for the hundredth time that it has destroyed the prestige of England, and it has caused

Earl Cairns to blush, who never blushed before. Well, sir, these are terrible calamities, especially the last; but before we consider how far these accusations can be sustained, let me ask you to think seriously what is the alternative which it is said we ought to have adopted. We are accused of dismembering the Empire, and to avoid this, we ought, in the opinion of our opponents, to have maintained the Annexation of the Transvaal. That Annexation was made by the Conservative Government upon two distinct assurances. They declared, in the first place, upon information which was supplied to them, that the majority of the white inhabitants in the Transvaal desired the transfer; and they declared that unless it were effected we should infallibly be involved in a Native War which would endanger our South African possessions.

“Well, you all know that after that transfer was effected we found ourselves, in spite of it, immediately involved in two Native Wars—one with Cetywayo and the Zulu people, and the other with Secocoeni; and you know, and they know now, if they did not know before, that the great majority of the Boer inhabitants of the Transvaal are bitterly hostile to the English rule: and yet we are told that we ought to have persevered in wrong-doing, after it was proved that the two grounds upon which the Annexation was defended were fallacious, and rested on no solid foundation—that we should still force our rule on an unwilling people, whose Independence we had solemnly engaged by Treaty to respect. And this we were to do in order to spare Lord Cairns the unwonted blush with which he graced his peroration, and alarmed his brother Peers. I will not at this moment stop to question the morality of such a step as that, but I want you to think for a moment of the expediency of it, of the wisdom of those Statesmen who recommend such a course to Her Majesty’s Government. It has been proved to us that the Boers are at all events brave soldiers, that they are skilled in the use of arms, that they are physically, at least, a match even for

English soldiers. The Transvaal is a country as large as France—a wild and difficult country—and it is perfectly evident to every one that if we are to hold it down by force we must permanently maintain a number of troops at least equal to the number of our possible opponents. Well, we know also that the Orange Free State, which is a neighbouring territory, would make common cause with their co-religionists and men of the same nationality in the Transvaal; and therefore I say that it is perfectly certain that not less than from 15,000 to 20,000 English troops must be permanently stationed there, if we are to hold that country by force and against the will of the inhabitants.

“And to what end are we to do this? To prevent the dismemberment of the Empire. Why, the Annexation was only reluctantly accepted by Lord Carnarvon three years ago. The territory has only been in our hands for a short three years, and it came into our possession upon information which we now know to be incorrect. And if we let them go, this population of 40,000—a population less than that contained in any one of the sixteen Wards of this town in which I am speaking—why, this dismembered Empire of ours will still contain 250,000,000 of subjects to the Queen, to rule whom well and wisely is a duty and a responsibility which I think is sufficient even for the wildest ambition.

“Well, but we are told that there is another course which has recommended itself to some of our critics, and that is, that we should have used the overwhelming forces which we placed at the disposal of Sir Evelyn Wood in order to attack the Boers, and that then, after we had defeated them in a bloody encounter—military honour being satisfied—we might have retired from the Transvaal, which we should have rendered desolate by the slaughter of many of its brave defenders. Before such a recommendation as that should commend itself to your minds, and to mine, let us consider for a moment what sort of people these are whom we are asked to treat in this revengeful

way. The Boers are not naturally a warlike race. They are a homely, industrious, but somewhat rude and uncivilised nation of farmers, living on the produce of the soil. They are animated by a deep and even stern religious sentiment, and they inherit from their ancestors—the men who won the Independence of Holland from the oppressive rule of Philip II of Spain—they inherit from them their unconquerable love of freedom and of liberty. Are not these qualities which commend themselves to men of the English race? Are they not virtues which we are proud to believe form the best characteristics of the English people? Is it against such a nation that we are to be called upon to exercise the dread arbitrament of arms? These men settled in the Transvaal in order to escape foreign rule. They had had many quarrels with the British. They left their homes in Natal, as the English Puritans left England and went to the United States, and they founded a little Republic of their own in the heart of Africa. In 1852 we made a Treaty with them; they agreed to give up slavery, which had hitherto prevailed in their midst, and we agreed to respect and to guarantee their Independence."

Mr. Chamberlain was less plausible when he ventured on the "magnanimity" line of argument:—

"When the terms of Peace were arranged" (he said), "when the Boers accepted our offer, as we had originally made it, we rejoiced in the prospect of a settlement without further effusion of blood, whether of Englishmen or Dutchmen; and we did not think the English people would feel themselves to be humiliated because their Government had refused knowingly to persist in a course of oppression and wrong-doing, and we had accepted, without a victory, terms which were the best we could reasonably expect that even the greatest victory would give to us. We are a great and powerful nation. What is the use of being great and powerful, if we are afraid to admit an error when we are conscious of it? Shame is not in the con-

fession of a mistake. Shame lies only in persistency in wilful wrong-doing."

Much may be forgiven to a peroration. But, as a matter of fact, we know now another reason why Mr. Gladstone agreed to an ignominious Peace. It was no sudden awakening to a sense of natural wrong-doing, no unexpected revelation of unknown facts, which changed Mr. Gladstone's purpose. This was caused, as the late Lord Kimberley recently explained, by a communication from President Brand. Briefly, this was to the effect that unless the British restored Independence to the Boers of the Transvaal they would also have to fight the Boers of the Orange Free State. This would mean a war of races in South Africa, and from that danger the British Government shrank. It was not a sufficient reason, but at least it was a solid and sensible one—far preferable to professions of magnanimity which never imposed on the English people. It was generally believed in England that Mr. Brand was our very good friend. Mr. Chamberlain—who, by the way, has more than once repudiated Lord Kimberley's account of Mr. Gladstone's motives—gave much credit to the President of the Free State for his action as an intermediary, and for having prevented his own people from going into the War. All this confidence may have been thoroughly justified, but it is possible that Mr. Brand exaggerated the warlike impulse of his fellow-citizens, and his own difficulty in keeping them under control. His sympathies, no doubt, were with his own race, and it would have been a clever stroke of policy to get the British Government out of the Transvaal without striking a blow, and at the same time earn their gratitude for saving them from an expensive conflict for which they had no heart.

Even if we were menaced with a war of races—which is not so certain as Mr. Gladstone and his colleagues honestly believed—what future could they think there would be for Englishmen in South Africa if we gave way

before a threat? The Boer never lived who believed that we yielded for any reason but because we had been beaten, and were afraid to try conclusions again. The struggle was only postponed: it could not be averted. What might have been accomplished in 1881 with a comparatively slight effort had to be completed twenty years afterwards at the cost of tens of thousands of lives and hundreds of millions of money.

There is no need here to do more than refer to the Evacuation of Candahar. The strategical arguments—in relation to the existing situation in 1881—were not, perhaps, so one-sided as Opposition critics seemed to think. On the assumption, however, that the withdrawal of the British was justified by military considerations, the decision was regrettable because it strengthened the belief on the Continent that there was no stability in British policy—that a Foreign Chancellerie had to deal with one England when the Conservatives were in power, another when Mr. Gladstone became Prime Minister. The point was forcibly put in a memorable speech by Lord Beaconsfield, the last he addressed to the House of Lords: “In every manner and on every occasion it was announced that the change of Government meant a change not merely in every part and portion of the Government, but that everything we considered concluded was to be re-opened, and everything that had been consummated was to be reversed; and that on the most important questions—either on Foreign relations, on Colonial situations, or on domestic position with reference to Ireland—on all these questions the utmost change was to be rapidly and immediately accomplished. Perpetual and complete reversal of all that has occurred was the order that was given, and the profession of faith that was announced.” The result was that, with the highest moral purpose, Mr. Gladstone’s Ministry hardened the general belief of the world in the “bad faith” of Great Britain.

This perpetual vacillation Lord Salisbury naturally,

though not quite justly, attributed (when he was speaking in Birmingham at Easter-time in 1883) to the conflict between the Moderate Liberals and the Radicals within the Cabinet. There was, he said, a movement of perpetual zigzag. "It is rather like one of those old Dutch clocks which we used to see in our infancy, when an old woman came out at one time and an old man at another. I would not for one moment attempt to instance who is the old man, and who is the old woman, but we may safely say that the mechanism of our political system is this—when it is going to be fine weather Lord Hartington appears, and when Mr. Joseph Chamberlain appears you may look out for squalls."

So far as home politics were concerned, the suggestion was, perhaps, not wide of the mark, but it had less bearing on foreign affairs. The *personnel* of the Cabinet had been further modified than by the retirement of Mr. Bright and the admission of Sir Charles Dilke.<sup>1</sup> Mr. Gladstone's health had been severely strained by the fierce Parliamentary struggles (which included the equally trivial and vexatious Bradlaugh episode) of 1881 and 1882, and he felt no longer equal to the double duties of First Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer. The latter office was assigned to Mr. Childers, who was succeeded at the War Office by Lord Hartington. The vacancy thus created at the Indian Office was filled by Lord Kimberley, whose place at the Colonial office was taken by Lord Derby—the Conservative Minister who had parted company with Lord Beaconsfield on the Eastern Question as soon as the British Government proceeded from words to deeds.

With a Cabinet thus composed, it is not difficult to see that counsels of timidity in Foreign and Colonial affairs

<sup>1</sup> In this connection it may be interesting to note that in order to facilitate Sir Charles Dilke's promotion Mr. Chamberlain offered to give up the Board of Trade to him and take the Chancellorship of the Duchy of Lancaster. Mr. Gladstone acknowledged the generosity of this proposal, and was gratified to find that he need not accept it. See Morley's "Gladstone."

would not emanate exclusively from the Radical element. As a matter of fact, though Mr. Chamberlain and Sir Charles Dilke concurred, of course, in the collective action of the Government, they were advocates of a comparatively bold policy. The abandonment of the Bechuanas to the tender mercies of the Boers, which Mr. Forster had condemned in a stinging speech in the House of Commons, lay uneasily on their conscience. Though they did not prevent Lord Derby from allowing Mr. Kruger to whittle the Pretoria Convention (1881) down to the still more exiguous Convention of London (1884), they did urge, and urged successfully, that Sir Charles Warren should be sent on the Expedition which rescued Bechuana-land from Boer domination, and reserved an important territory for British occupation. On foreign policy generally, Mr. Gladstone wrote to assure the Queen, when his Cabinet was in course of reconstruction, that Mr. Chamberlain's views would be far more acceptable to her than Mr. Bright's had been.

Injurious to the reputation of the Government as had been their ineffective interposition in the affairs of Eastern Europe, their withdrawal from Candahar, the unpopularity of Lord Ripon's administration of India, and their weak attitude towards the Boers, they were, from the election-eering point of view, still more unhappy in their dealings with the Soudan. The death of General Gordon was their crowning misfortune. The restoration of order at Cairo and Alexandria, and the establishment of Tewfik Pasha in the position where he afterwards proved himself a loyal and staunch friend of Great Britain, was not the end of the responsibilities involved by our action in Egypt. The rapid growth of the military power of Mohammed Ahmed—the Mahdi—and his alliance with the Baggaras had enabled him to overrun the province of Kordofan, and constituted a formidable menace to the outposts of Egyptian civilisation maintained in the provinces of Darfur, Bahr-el-Ghazal, and Equatoria, by Slatin, Lupton, and Emin.



The whole country was, in fact, in open revolt. The Egyptian Government made an attempt to relieve their officers. At the head of 10,000 undisciplined troops, Hicks was sent to occupy Khartoum, which had been abandoned by the Mahdi. After a halt of six months, for the purpose of getting his army into shape, he advanced to the relief of Kordofan. He was met by the Mahdi at Shekan, and his whole army destroyed. Neither he nor any of his European officers escaped to tell the tale. Meantime, the Eastern portion of the Soudan was being overrun by Osman Digna, the Mahdi's very capable lieutenant. The garrisons at Suakim, Tokar, and Sinkat were completely isolated. Though it had been decided to abandon the Soudan, the Egyptian Government was at least bound to rescue its outposts; but the force which General Baker led with that object was cut to pieces at El Teb, and he had to fall back with the remnants on Trinkitat. Elsewhere things were no better. Kassala was closely invested by the enemy; Slatin capitulated at Darra; and the Mahdi was advancing (July 1883) to the famous siege of Khartoum.

What was the British Government to do? The Occupation of Egypt Proper had been very unwelcome to that section of their Liberal supporters who adhered to the Non-intervention doctrines of Mr. Bright. Nor was it commended, except in a left-handed manner, by those Conservatives who were never tired of exalting the late Lord Beaconsfield's Imperialism. Whether Ministers ventured on a bold policy, or followed a cautious one, they would incur criticism and lose popularity. Their majority was shaken in the House of Commons, in spite of the demoralised condition of the Opposition. It was eventually decided by a committee of the Cabinet in January 1884 to adopt a middle course. The limits of the Khedive's authority should be fixed at Wady Halfa; Khartoum should be abandoned, and the troops withdrawn. They could get no assistance, however, from the Ministry of

Nubar at Cairo: they must act on their own responsibility. It so happened that General Gordon was on the point of starting for the Congo Free State in the service of the King of the Belgians. Lord Granville induced him to give up that mission, and assist Ministers in their embarrassment. He told them that their programme could not be executed. The Western Soudan, Kordofan, and Darfur should be abandoned, but Khartoum must be held; and with it the provinces between the White Nile and the Red Sea, north of Sennar. On 18th January Gordon went forth to "rescue and retire." In the East, General Graham was sent out to deal with Osman Digna. This plan of the Government was, of course, sharply criticised in both Houses of Parliament—they were doing too little, they were doing too much, and what they were attempting had begun too late.

In all these charges there was something more than an element of justice; but the most reassuring statement was made by Sir Charles Dilke, who said that at the three most critical positions they were served by three of the ablest men who ever served the country—Sir Evelyn Baring (Lord Cromer) at Cairo, Admiral Hewett at Suakim, and General Gordon at Khartoum. "We ask," he said, "and we follow the advice which these men give us." As a matter of fact, they did not follow Gordon's advice. He proposed to place Khartoum under Zubeir Pasha as Governor, "a quiet, far-seeing, thoughtful man of iron will, and a born ruler of men." He had conquered Darfur, and was a powerful influence in the Soudan. But the Government at home did not venture to employ him—he had been engaged in the slave trade! A vote of Censure on them had been put down by Mr. W. E. Forster, and, had they made use of the Pasha, it was expected that they would be defeated in the House of Commons. In April, Lord Hartington announced that the project of withdrawing the garrison from Khartoum had been given up—Gordon must settle down to a prolonged siege. But there

was no question of abandoning him, no fear as to his safety. Yet, they knew—and it was made public—that his troops had been routed, his Bashi-Bazouks had mutinied, and practically he had to rely for defence on the townspeople of Khartoum. Ministers, no doubt, trusted to the remarkable influence and resourcefulness of Gordon, and hoped that he would find some way out of the difficulty.

Meanwhile, the country was growing impatient. Gordon was a popular hero, and it was known that they would have to pay a severe penalty “if a hair of his head were harmed.” He declared that if the millionaires of England and America would equip a force of 2000 or 3000 Turks he would “smash the Mahdi at Khartoum.” In reply to Lord Granville’s suggestion that he should use his discretion as to holding on where he was or retiring by any available route, he retorted that it would be an “indelible disgrace” to abandon the garrisons at Sennar, Kassala, Berber, and Dongola. He was, it must be confessed, in spite of his genius and loyalty, a somewhat uncomfortable agent for embarrassed Ministers to deal with. When the time comes for the full story of that period to be told, it will be found, perhaps, that the vacillations and procrastinations of the Home authorities, though they can never be justified, were not without some sort of explanation. Gordon’s communications to them were not altogether consistent, nor was he always of the same mind. Their fault was not indifference to his fate, but unwillingness to realise the steadily increasing seriousness of the military situation.

The Relief Expedition under Lord Wolseley was ordered too late, and it was too slow in starting. It is true that on 29th December 1884, Gordon had sent word that he could hold Khartoum for another year. But he did not reckon against treachery. The town was captured, and the garrison massacred before the rescuers had come up. The general feeling of the country was fairly expressed in the Vote of Censure moved by Lord Salisbury

in the House of Lords—that the deplorable failure of the Relief Expedition had been due to the indecision and culpable delay of the Government in commencing operations. There was, no doubt, more difference of opinion with regard to the further declaration that the abandonment of the Soudan was “dangerous to the peace of Egypt and inconsistent with the interests of the Empire.” Still, no serious exception could be taken to Lord Salisbury’s epigram, that there had been alternate periods of “slumber and rush,” and the rush had been “too unprepared and too unintelligent to repair the damage done by the slumber.”

The good faith—and the simplicity—of the intentions of the Gladstone Ministry with regard to Egypt were illustrated by the Special Mission which had been entrusted to the late Lord Dufferin. That shrewd and subtle Statesman saw at once that the Dual Control was gone beyond any possible means of recall. It had worked without any intolerable hitch so long as the Sultan was willing to accept the Anglo-French control of Egyptian finance. But Mr. Gladstone’s policy with regard to South-Eastern Europe had so irritated him that no form of co-operation was possible in the future. He had hoped that the Arabi Rebellion, promoted by his agents, would lead to the expulsion of English and French influence from Egypt. Much to his annoyance, though the Condominium had been destroyed, it was replaced by the single and undisputed authority of Great Britain, and his Sovereign rights were reduced to a mere titular recognition. The Sultan, then, having been thrust on one side, and the Khedive being prepared to act under English advice, it only remained, since we had renounced the idea of governing Egypt as a Dependency, to grant it some form of nominal Self-Government. The Report prepared by Lord Dufferin, and published early in 1883, sketched out a complete system of reforms, which were to be carried out under the benevolent protection and supervision of the British Government.

Those who are curious in State Papers will be repaid by the perusal of this very clever but absolutely futile document. The views of the Gladstone Government were expressed by Mr. Chamberlain, with his usual lucidity, in a speech which he delivered on 15th January 1884, at Newcastle.

“There is a great Party in this country which seems to have learnt nothing by experience, but which is always eager for an extension of an Empire already, I should think, vast enough to satisfy the most inordinate ambition, and which taxes our resources to the utmost in the attempt to govern it well and wisely. If we were to accept the advice which is so freely tendered to us, I predict that the temporary difficulties we have to face would become permanent dangers. What has happened? These unforeseen events may have delayed the execution of our policy, but they have not proved it to be in itself unwise or impossible. The defeat of the Egyptian forces in the Soudan is not necessarily an evil. There have been many similar disasters in the course of the great campaign in the centre of Africa, and there are many parts of the wild country which extends over hundreds of miles into the interior which are whitened with the bones of the Egyptian soldiers who have been torn from their homes in order to carry on the projects of their rulers, and all through the Occupation has been a continuous strain upon the resources of a poor country. It has increased the burdens upon the peasantry of Egypt; and now that they are likely to be relieved of this strain upon their resources, they may well be—probably will be—freer to undertake measures of internal improvement, and the Egyptian Government will be able to develop, into a prosperous and self-working institution, the organisation which has already been commenced in that country with fair prospects of success.

“I confess that it surprises me to see that the success of this institution is doubted in quarters in which I should not have expected such a scepticism. I was reading an

eloquent speech by your senior member the other day, in which he spoke with scorn of the attempt to engraft Constitutional Government upon Egypt. Egypt, he said, was the product of centuries of enslavement. Well, I am more sanguine than Mr. Cowen. I do not believe that any nation is so degraded and so hopeless that it may not be led forward in the work of Self-Government. I think that the problem which he declares so hopeless has been solved within the last few years, almost before our very eyes. It has been solved in the case of Bulgaria, which is making rapid progress under the free institutions with which it has been endowed. These free institutions did not grow up spontaneously, as Mr. Cowen says they should do. They were implanted into the country, and Bulgaria had suffered oppression as cruel, and tyranny even greater than the Egyptians, and at the hands of the same people—the Turks. In any case, I say that the duty of the Government is clear. We have assumed a duty which we cannot neglect. We have set our hands to the plough, and we ought not to go back. We cannot leave Egypt to anarchy; but, on the other hand, we do not, and we ought not to, withdraw from any of the assurances we have given. The task is likely to be more difficult than was supposed. It will take a longer time than was anticipated. There is nothing in what has happened which makes me think that it will not ultimately, with time, patience, and discretion, succeed, and be completely accomplished."

This sanguine utterance was delivered within a few days of the fall of Khartoum.

As if to complete their unhappiness in Diplomatic relations, the Government, who had been accused of persistently truckling to Russia, were brought, by no fault of theirs, to the very verge of declaring War against the Czar. It had been agreed between Lord Granville and M. de Giers that a Joint Boundary Commission should be appointed by the two Powers. We had

warned the Ameer that trouble would ensue if he moved troops up to Penjdeh, and that he must not look for help from us; but he was resolved that the Russians should not take "a piece of a fragment from the ruins of his frontier." Before Sir Peter Lumsden arrived, the Russians and Afghans had exchanged defiances, and on 26th March a conflict broke out, in which the Afghans were completely routed. Though they had acted against our advice, the discomfiture of our allies reflected on us, and in any case we were bound by our interest to prevent the Russians from getting a footing in the Ameer's territory. There was no saying where the matter would end. The Indian Government commenced to mobilise its forces. At home, Ministers in both Houses declared, on 26th March, that a "time of emergency" had arisen, and the Reserves were to be called out.

Fortunately, Parliament was on the point of separating for the Easter Recess, but on 8th April, when it met again, Mr. Gladstone, speaking, as he said, in "circumstances of great gravity," declared that an "unprovoked aggression" had been committed. It was not then known in England that the Afghans had been at least as much to blame as the Russians, and for several weeks most Englishmen were convinced that War with Russia was practically inevitable. On 21st April Mr. Gladstone announced in the House of Commons that he would ask for a Vote of Credit for £11,000,000—as it had become necessary to review our military position. Of this sum, he explained that less than half would be required for operations in the Soudan! Quite unexpectedly the storm cleared away. Fuller accounts were received from the scene of disturbance, and the Ameer himself, who was paying a visit to Lord Dufferin, Lord Ripon's successor as Viceroy, declared that he attached little importance to the incident, and was not prepared to insist that Penjdeh was within his territory. The truth was that he found that he could not depend on the loyalty of the tribesmen at that point, and

was ready to accept some more defensible position, to be arranged between the Indian and Russian Governments.

Though the specific alarm had passed away, the general sense of disquietude remained, and a feeling had arisen that Ministers had generally mismanaged the business of the country. In the House of Commons their majority had gradually gone to pieces, and the Nationalists were actively hostile. When the Budget was introduced on 8th June 1885, an Amendment, moved by Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, was carried by 12 votes, 39 of the Irish having voted against the Government. In a few days the formalities of resignation were completed, and the end was reached of what Mr. Bright had once called the best House of Commons that had ever been elected.



## CHAPTER V

### AT THE BOARD OF TRADE

The office assigned to Mr. Chamberlain in 1880, though, in the ninety-four years of its existence, it had been held by several men who afterwards reached distinction, was but of secondary importance. Neither in salary nor authority does the President of the Board of Trade (reconstituted from Cromwell's Board of Trade and Plantations) rank among the leading members of an Administration. Such influence as he may exercise is derived from his personal qualities—chiefly, perhaps, in his power of forcing his way through the inner group that surrounds most Prime Ministers, and getting the ear of his Chief. Unless the head of a minor Department possesses this practical quality, he may expect to be told, when the materials are being selected for the Speech from the Throne, that his special proposals must be postponed to another Session. Even if one or two of his Bills have been mentioned in the Government Programme, or advanced as far as Second Reading, they are more than likely to be sacrificed in the "Massacre of Innocents" which is held with almost canonical regularity—on the earliest possible date after Midsummer—when it is found that the "business of the country" has reached a state of hopeless congestion, *i.e.*, when Ministers are forced to confess that they have undertaken more than they can perform. It is the amiable way of a Premier to begin the Session by making things pleasant all round, and promising each of his earnest colleagues full opportunity of legislation for his own Department. Later

on—when the Opposition have once again displayed their customary, but always absolutely unexpected, perversity in crossing the plans of a long-suffering Government—he begins to make terms with his Ministers. That is to say, he throws over those who will not make themselves troublesome.

These being the principles on which the affairs of the British Empire are conducted, it behoves every young Administrator who aims at getting personal credit in Parliament, or serving his country faithfully in that Department to which he has been called, to establish a reputation for pertinacity. This useful character Mr. Chamberlain had acquired at Birmingham; he improved it in Whitehall. If it had been thought that this “pushing Mayor from the Provinces” would soon “find his level” when he got among “real Statesmen in London,” the anticipation was not fulfilled. It will be seen from the record of his work at the Board of Trade in 1880–5, that he managed to press upon a preoccupied Administration, and to extract from a neglected and ramshackle Department, a solid amount of useful legislation. His disappointment over the Merchant Shipping Bill had been compensated beforehand by his achievements in Patent and Bankruptcy legislation.

The secret of his success need be no mystery—he always worked full time. Most of our prominent public men belong to that comfortable class which has no tradition of day-by-day and all-day work, and, though a few ambitious young men of good birth make politics a regular profession, they are, as a rule, not capable of steady and sustained exertion—the few exceptions proving the rule by rapidly attaining high Office. The other class of politicians who help to fill Ministries are men, more or less advanced in years, who have made their positions in some engrossing profession or business, and can spare for Parliament only a portion of their days and the fag-end of their careers. They are valued rather for their experience of men and

affairs, their trained judgment, their reputation and influence, than for any driving force contributed to the political mechanism.

Mr. Chamberlain, when he entered Parliament at forty years of age, possessed the advantages of both classes without the disabilities of either. The almost abnormal youthfulness of his appearance was but an accurate expression of unimpaired energies, while with the unfettered leisure of a man of fortune he combined the habits of a man of business. Whether in agitating on public platforms, or directing Party organisation, he laboured as industriously as an official whose salary is regulated by the results he achieves. When he was grappling with administrative problems in Whitehall, he was as keen about the efficiency of his Department as if he were building up a private business. The permanent officials found at once that they had to deal—not with an indolent or amateur Chief, who relied on them to coach him for answering Questions in the House of Commons, or for explaining the Departmental Measures that might be demanded by public opinion—but with a Managing Director who meant to keep his subordinates up to the mark, and was always on the look-out to encourage and promote those who gave him loyal assistance. Men who have opposed Mr. Chamberlain, those who have tried to thwart him, have many hard things to say of him; but those who have worked in concert with him all agree that he never forgets efficient service, and (like Mr. Gladstone) has the very useful power of picking out those who can render it. When he went to the Board of Trade, it was not a specially inefficient Department, but its chief officials had been permitted to go their own various ways, and do pretty much as they pleased. Before he left it in 1885, he had animated it with a brief sense of corporate existence, and brought the loosely-compacted organism under the control of a guiding brain.

His beginnings were sufficiently modest. His first

Parliamentary Session resulted only in a couple of useful, but not generally important, Measures, relating to the Payment of Seamen's Wages and to Grain Cargoes. In the following year, preoccupied as Parliament was with exciting disputes, and hampered by organised Obstruction, he passed a Measure under which Municipalities that desired to adopt Electric Lighting were relieved from the heavy expense of promoting a special Bill in each case, and could obtain the necessary powers under a Provisional Order from the Board of Trade.

This was a period in our Parliamentary annals when Ministers had to be thankful for small mercies. None of Mr. Gladstone's colleagues fretted more impatiently under the legislative impotence of the House of Commons than his President of the Board of Trade, who had pledged himself to a number of wide-reaching political changes, as well as to various Departmental Measures. His attempt to reduce the scandalous extravagance of Bankruptcy procedure, and to foil the devices of unscrupulous insolvents, had fallen to the ground, simply because there was no time to discuss the Clauses. It had been introduced before Easter, but it offered so many opportunities alike for legitimate and colourable Debate that it had to be abandoned. The mere sacrifice of this, or any other, Departmental Bill—which was likely to make at least as many enemies as friends—would not, by itself, have stimulated Mr. Gladstone to attempt the task of reforming Procedure in the House of Commons. But it had become almost impossible—so resourceful were the Irish members in the art of Obstruction—for Ministers to carry the political Measures in which their collective credit was involved; and the “paralysis of necessary social legislation” came in as a useful argument for strengthening the powers of the majority.

A special Session was convened in the Autumn of 1881 for considering the New Rules of Procedure, and it was known that Mr. Chamberlain, comparatively fresh as he was to work at Westminster, had suggested some of the

alterations which were then considered almost alarmingly stringent, but which a very short experience showed to be too weak for their purpose, and which had to be enlarged and strengthened by a subsequent Administration.

More efficient, and less controversial, than any attempt to deal with Obstruction on the floor of the House, was the plan, specially favoured by Mr. Chamberlain, for transferring the discussion of the details of complicated Bills from a Committee of the whole House to one of the two Grand Committees (on Trade and on Law) which were now instituted, and to which a Measure might be referred after the principle had been accepted at the Second Reading. Each Committee was to consist of not less than sixty and not more than eighty members; twenty made a quorum; the proceedings were to be public; and when a Bill had passed the Report stage in one of these Committees it occupied the same position as if it had been "reported" to a Committee of the whole House.

As Mr. Chamberlain had been largely responsible for the introduction of this sensible reform, so he was one of the first Ministers to profit by it. In the 1883 Session he reintroduced his Bankruptcy Bill. It was read a second time on 19th March, and then referred to the Grand Committee on Trade. Though it contained about a hundred and fifty Clauses and a number of Schedules, and though it embodied some more or less contentious proposals, it was reported to the House before the end of June, and ultimately became law.

Under the previous system, based on the Act of 1869—a good Measure in its time, but long antiquated—the facilities offered to fraud under the name of Liquidations by Arrangement and Compositions had long been recognised and denounced, but nothing was done to remove the abuses which had grown up, until Mr. Chamberlain's first Bill was introduced. He proposed to put an end to such proceedings—collusive, as they frequently were—between the debtor and certain favoured creditors, and

recognised no liquidation except in Bankruptcy. For the legal supervision, honest but ineffective, commercial supervision was substituted, and, even if the debtor was himself the petitioner, he would, *ipso facto*, deprive himself of the control over his estate. This would pass into the hands of the Official Receiver. It was made necessary for a meeting of creditors to be held within seven days of the petition; the acceptance of Compositions was to be strictly controlled; no discharge could be granted except by the Court; the trustees were to be paid a fixed remuneration, and the accounts audited by a public authority. These principles, which were reproduced in the 1883 Bill, had been approved by that excellent Conservative lawyer, Sir John Holker; but a sharp controversy arose on the proposal that all money received by the trustee should be paid into the Bank of England, and Mr. Chamberlain agreed that the Board of Trade should be empowered, on application being made, to employ a local Bank. It was calculated, however, that the use of the large balances that would lie from time to time at the disposal of the Government would amount to about £80,000 a year, which would make the new official machinery practically self-supporting.

It was acknowledged by practical men of business, and by all lawyers except those who were interested in maintaining the old system, or felt indisposed to adapt themselves to a novel procedure, that the new Act marked a great improvement. If it has not altogether excluded the possibility of fraudulent evasion, and if the expenses of Bankruptcy administration are still ridiculously disproportionate to the sums involved, the explanation is that habitual insolvents, and the legal advisers whom they employ, are a resourceful race with whose inventions it is not easy for legislation to keep pace. Moreover, it is not the business of lawyers to reduce expenses, while the dialectical ingenuity of Judges in the interpretation of Statutes, in this as in many other instances, does much

to defeat the well-understood, though sometimes ambiguously expressed, intentions of Parliament. Nevertheless, the 1883 Act has stood the test of time fairly well, and, in spite of slight modifications which have been introduced in one way or another, and although further legislation is now desirable, the existing Law of Bankruptcy is pretty much what Mr. Chamberlain made it more than twenty years ago.

In the following Session, it should be mentioned that some of the Conservatives in Parliament—irritated by his vehement agitation for Electoral Reform, and eager to find a handle against him—charged him with having made an unfair use of his patronage under the Act. It was said that of the sixty-seven Official Receivers appointed, no fewer than fifty-one were Liberal in politics, and nineteen had been electioneering agents. His reply was, that the nominations had not been made by himself, but by a Departmental Committee, and that he was personally acquainted with only five of the new officials. Two of them he knew to be Liberals, and one to be a Conservative, while he was ignorant of the views of the others. It is possible, of course, that the Committee to whom the selection had been entrusted may have favoured candidates who professed the same views as the Chief of the Department; but it was not alleged that any of the gentlemen nominated were in any way unfit for the work, or that applicants of conspicuous merit had been passed over merely because they were connected with the Conservative Party.

The Patent Act, which was also passed in 1883, was intended to assist poor inventors—a class of men very much at the mercy of unscrupulous exploiters—to profit by their discoveries. The Provisional Fee was reduced from £5 to £1, and the “first payment” from £20 to £3. For the sum of £4, therefore, the full rights in a new idea were protected for four years. By that time it should in any likely case be possible to see whether the scheme was

worth any serious outlay. For a complete patent it was necessary to pay about £150—not an extravagant charge for a monopoly of fourteen years.

By practical measures of this kind Mr. Chamberlain was making a solid reputation in the House of Commons, and, if he had never spoken outside Westminster, it is probable that a different fate might have attended the Merchant Shipping Bill which he introduced in 1884. But, as we shall presently see, his platform activity, in view of the approaching Dissolution of Parliament, had rendered him an equal object of dread and detestation to the Conservatives. Naturally, they set themselves to damage his position in the House of Commons, nor can it be denied that some of the circumstances connected with his Merchant Shipping Bill gave them an opening of which it would have hardly been human not to take advantage. Well-meant as were the proposals with which the President of the Board of Trade now associated the Government, the cause had been prejudiced by the vituperative extravagances of Mr. Samuel Plimsoll. The Conservative Government had recognised in 1875 that certain British firms were more or less indifferent to the safety of the crews whom they employed. It paid them better, they thought, to sacrifice a vessel now and then (especially as they would be recouped by the insurance) than to spend money every year on keeping it seaworthy. In a few instances, no doubt—though the number was much exaggerated by sensational politicians and novelists in search of a plot—there had been something worse than mere negligence. Vessels had been insured far beyond their value, and sent out to sea for the purpose of being lost or scuttled.

The outcry about these “coffin-ships” had caught the popular imagination, and Sir Charles Adderley (Lord Norton), who was then President of the Board of Trade, had brought in a Bill to check such criminal malpractices. In the course of the Session it was considered necessary



or advisable to abandon this Measure. Thereupon Mr. Plimsoll, who had made himself the champion of the seamen, worked himself into a state of benevolent excitement. He implored the Government "not to consign some thousands of living human beings to undeserved and miserable death." Turning on certain ship-owning members of the House who had resisted the Bill, he described them as villains whom he was resolved to unmask! Naturally, there was an angry scene, and a few days afterwards, being a generous-hearted man, he made a very handsome apology for the quite unfounded charges he had brought against persons as honourable as himself. But this experience did not induce him to modify his style of advocacy. Nor was public sentiment altogether against him, since his philanthropic intentions were as evident as his perversity.

A temporary Measure was passed before the end of the Session, followed by another in 1876. In 1880 he brought in a Bill which provided that all grain cargoes must be loaded in sacks or bags—a sensible and practical proposal, which would materially reduce the risks of navigation. But when it was opposed by the members for Westminster and Guildford, he put up placards in their Constituencies, denouncing their conduct as inhuman and degrading. On being called to account, he began by attempting to justify his conduct; but, on being threatened with the penalties of Breach of Privilege, he made another apology. Here, however, the matter could not be allowed to rest; and Sir Stafford Northcote, as Leader of the House, prepared and carried a formal Motion that the honourable member for Derby had committed a Breach of Privilege, but that, as he had withdrawn the offensive expressions he had employed, the House thought that no further action was necessary. Although nobody believed that Mr. Plimsoll had been actuated by personal malice against the gentlemen whom he traduced, it was felt that these successive slanders and

retractations had brought discredit on the cause as well as on the champion. Though further amending legislation was carried in 1882 and 1883, neither the House of Commons nor the country was disposed to look very favourably on a comprehensive scheme which was believed to be more or less inspired by Mr. Plimsoll. Nor can it be said that Mr. Chamberlain's method of promoting legislation was either conciliatory to the shipowners or advantageous to a Government which was already losing its popularity.

In the first place, he had previously associated himself with Mr. Plimsoll's outrageous methods. He was Mayor of Birmingham in 1875, and presided at a meeting in that city, held to protest against the action of the Government in abandoning Sir Charles Adderley's Bill, and to give Mr. Plimsoll an assurance of sympathy and support. He had then referred to Mr. Plimsoll's wild charges as the expression of a "natural indignation."

It is true that as President of the Board of Trade he had begun by soliciting the assistance of the leading shipowners. In reply to a Deputation from the Associated Chambers of Shipping in March 1883, he had offered, before introducing his Bill, to send it round to the chief shipping organisations, and to invite advice, assistance, and suggestions. He had implored them not to meet him with a *non possumus*, and reminded them it was their interest as well as their duty to remedy abuses. He consulted underwriters, and shipmasters—anybody who was able to give information. But though there was some difference of opinion as to the cause of the mischief there was no difference as to its extent. Nevertheless, he found that "the best men in the trade, men who were conducting their business in a way which could not possibly be criticised, and were doing everything they could for the safety and comfort of their seamen, men who would not be touched by any legislation that anybody could possibly introduce" were nevertheless so "influenced by *esprit de*

*corps*" that they would not move to help him. He was left, therefore, to his own resources.

This, no doubt, was correct, so far as it went. But the respectable shipowners, the overwhelming majority, were influenced by something more than *esprit de corps*. They would only have been too glad to see every black sheep driven out of their business. But they felt, not without reason, that it would be impossible to devise restrictions that would control the disreputable firms, which would not also inconvenience and even injure those who enjoyed the highest character. Nothing is more vexatious to an honest man than the constant supervision of officials who insist on treating him as a potential rogue. The most intelligent and elastic administration of Government regulations means waste of time and strain on the temper. Moreover, the British shipowners were already beginning to suffer from foreign competition, and could not afford to give away any points to their rivals. Indeed, whether rightly or wrongly, it is now alleged—by many shipowners who have no sympathy with any kind of dishonesty or inhumanity—that British firms are seriously handicapped by having to conform to rules which are not imposed in foreign ports. However that may be, it was inevitable—though Mr. Chamberlain was surprised—that the trade as a whole should resist the legislation which he proposed. Nor were their suspicions allayed, or their apprehensions modified, by knowing that the Minister was in frequent conference and unconcealed sympathy with the man who had defamed them as a body. They had brought Mr. Plimsoll to book: they would give Mr. Chamberlain a fall.

Yet they could not deny that he had a strong case. There had been not only a terrible loss of life at sea, but much of it was preventible. These were the facts as related by himself:—

"I found, in the first place, every year more than 3000 lives were lost at sea; that in some years this total amounted to 3500 and even more. Consider for a moment

under what circumstances these lives were lost. Death is always a pathetic thing; but death, when it comes under circumstances of such horror, and when it comes in the shape of a violent end to existence, is still more tragic and pathetic. And it is not only the men whose lives are lost, whose fate you have to consider. What is the fate of their families, who are left without resource, struggling against destitution, when the bread-winner is removed? The next point which struck me was this, that the proportion of this loss of life to the men employed was something extravagant and almost horrible. I stated, the first time I had an occasion of speaking about this subject to the shipowners themselves, that it amounted to 1 in 60 of the men employed in a single year. I have since had more careful calculations made. I have examined the subject from every side, and I say that I understated the facts, and that the loss of life in a single year in the British Mercantile Marine has been actually 1 in 56. But what does it matter whether it is 1 in 56, or 1 in 60, or 1 in 100? It is a loss of life absolutely unparalleled in any other trade, and a loss of life which is deplorable in itself, and which ought not to be endured by a civilised people.

“Then I went on naturally to the next point of the inquiry. I tried to discover how far this loss of life was preventible. I am sorry to say I found too many men inclined to look upon it as a necessary incident in the prosecution of a great commercial enterprise. I say, if this loss of life is a necessary incident, no commercial enterprise which involves it is justifiable. But I do not believe that it is necessary. I have never found any one, impartial and experienced, who denied for a moment that there was not a large proportion of this loss that might be prevented if full and proper precautions were taken in connection with the management of this great business. I found, and this concluded my inquiry, that connected with this loss was the extraordinary fact that in a great number of cases, I am not certain that it might not be so in the

majority of cases, the owners whose vessels went to the bottom, the bones of whose crews whitened the sands—these men suffered no loss, and might even in some cases make a profit. I thought this was a state of things which loudly called for a remedy. I for one was not prepared to take the responsibility of standing by with folded hands, doing nothing to remove a source of so much misery and suffering to so many of my countrymen.”

The Bill, as introduced into the House of Commons in the Session 1884, did not, Mr. Chamberlain confessed, go so far as he desired, but he used the concessions—which he had made, he said, “under pressure,”—as arguments why the shipowners should meet him in an amicable spirit. It was not very probable that they would respond to such an appeal. Why should they consent to any compromise with a Government which they had already proved themselves able to influence by open menace? The leading principles of the Bill were reasonable, but the proposed machinery, though not intended to be vexatious, was such as no trade would accept unless it were impossible to offer resistance. The main causes of the unnecessary loss of life at sea, Mr. Chamberlain explained at the Second Reading Debate, were under-manning, over-loading, and over-insurance. With the last of these he proposed to deal by formally enacting that a marine insurance was in any case to be no more than a contract for indemnity, so that no shipowner could make a profit by exposing his crew to danger. But if the vessel had been rendered unseaworthy by any neglect on his part he should be disabled from recovering any compensation under his policy. This, of course, aimed only at the few disreputable firms which were suspected of absolute foul play, but it might place honourable men in the disagreeable position of being called upon to establish their good faith. The contract with officers and seamen was to imply an undertaking that the vessel had been seaworthy when she left port, and that all reasonable means would be employed to keep her in

that condition. The owner was brought within the general scope of the Employers' Liability Act (except that he was not responsible for proved errors in navigation), nor was he permitted to contract himself out of his liabilities, either to his crew or the owners of property carried on board. Districts were to be marked out by the Board of Trade, each with a local marine court, consisting of the detaining officer, a shipowners' representative, and an officers' representative. Though the Government official would not be able to detain a vessel against the consent of the shipowners' representative, unless under an order of the Admiralty Court, he was entitled to issue a warning to the owner, the master, and the crew, that the ship was unseaworthy. This would relieve the officers and seamen from the penalties which they would otherwise incur by breaking their contract of service. Fair as this proposal seemed, necessary as it may have been, it put every shipowner more or less under the thumb of Government officials.

The general principles of the Bill were supported by a strong body of philanthropic sentiment, not only on the Radical side of the House. But the shipowners had something more than class-interest to rely on. As to the statements of fact on which the Measure was based, there was a strong conflict of evidence. A great part of Mr. Chamberlain's case rested on the alleged prevalence of over-insurance. Yet it was asserted by one of the greatest Companies, one that did a business of fifteen millions a year, that it could not trace a single instance of a vessel being voluntarily sacrificed for the sake of getting the insurance money. This is but one example of the many contradictory statements between which the outside public had to choose. It was afterwards established by the Royal Commission appointed in 1885 that, in point of fact, many lives were every year lost at sea through preventible risks, and that the need did exist for drastic legislation. We may also take it that these facts had already been proved to Mr. Chamberlain's satisfaction when he drafted his Bill,

but at the time when it came before the House of Commons there was no general conviction that such strong measures were required or could be justified. Nor did the reputation either of the Government as a body, or the President of the Board of Trade as an individual, stand so high in point of impartiality that their word would be accepted as sufficient evidence of fact. Justly or unjustly, they were accused of wanton interference with trade interests, and of disregard for the rights of property, and this proposal was plausibly represented as one more instance of a mischievous general propensity.

The storm was too strong for Mr. Gladstone, and he gave way. The Bill was withdrawn, and the retreat covered by the appointment of a Royal Commission to conduct an inquiry and issue a Report on the whole subject. Mr. Chamberlain was bitterly mortified by the most serious rebuff which he had encountered in public life. He did not relish having to confess himself beaten, especially as he was honestly convinced that his remedies were not more violent than the case demanded, and that he had only been defeated by a coalition between Party spirit and Class selfishness. In a private interview with Mr. Gladstone, he expressed his desire to resign office, and, being released from responsibility for the decision of the Government, to fight the whole question out on a public platform, and obtain an informal verdict from the country.

Obviously, this suggestion would not suit the Prime Minister. So long as Mr. Chamberlain remained a Member of the Administration, he was, as it were, a hostage given by the Radicals to official Liberalism. A General Election could not be far distant; the majority in Parliament were getting out of hand, the Conservatives, so long a disorganised and almost negligible force at Westminster, were becoming confident and aggressive under Lord Randolph Churchill's irregular leadership; the Nationalists were openly and bitterly hostile. If the Radical vote were lost, or merely weakened, Ministers

might any evening be defeated in the Lobbies. Even if that peril were avoided, how could Mr. Chamberlain's place be filled in the Cabinet? To appoint a Moderate Liberal would be to give umbrage to the Radicals. Yet, which of them would venture to join an Administration that two of their Leaders deserted—and deserted on questions of principle? Mr. Bright gone, Mr. Chamberlain gone, was it certain that Sir Charles Dilke would remain?

At all costs, Mr. Chamberlain must be retained. It is true, that if his resignation had been accepted, he would not have come forward as a declared opponent of his late colleagues. That would have been an act of ingratitude towards Mr. Gladstone of which he was incapable. Yet it would have been impossible for him to justify his Bill before the country without passing something more than indirect censure on the Government which had thrown it aside. The great body of electors do not care for fine distinctions—a man is either for the Government or against it. Mr. Chamberlain might offer explanations and plead excuses for his late colleagues; but there was no way of vindicating himself without showing that the Government had, at least, been guilty of culpable weakness. To let him loose as a free lance, however friendly he might be in his general intentions, was to invite defeat at the polls. Moreover, he was more than a skilful administrator; more than a vigorous speaker; more than an influential leader of opinion in the Midlands—he was also the moving spirit in the National Liberal Federation, the chief engineer of the Party machinery.

These, of course, were not the arguments which Mr. Gladstone addressed to his hesitating colleague, nor were they the only ones that weighed in his mind. He had the highest appreciation of Mr. Chamberlain's political capacity, and was personally grateful for the staunch and effective help which he had received from the Radicals, chiefly through Mr. Chamberlain's adherence. There were, he said, more important matters in hand than the



Merchant Shipping Bill. There was, for instance, the question of the Franchise. Liberals were at that time in the very midst of this agitation, and the best chance of doing justice to the seamen lay through a Reformed Parliament. To this movement no man was more deeply pledged than Mr. Chamberlain, and this, no doubt, was the lure that caught him, when, in "deference to Mr. Gladstone's judgment," he withdrew his resignation. At the same time, he was allowed to "save his face." He was not asked, nor would he have consented, to abandon the object aimed at, even if he had to give up the means proposed. Mr. Gladstone showed him the "most kind and generous consideration," as he explained in a speech delivered at Hull in August of the following year (1885):—

"Mr. Gladstone did the best he could under the circumstances. When the Bill was withdrawn, it was decided to appoint a Royal Commission to inquire into the whole subject. I endeavoured to make that Commission as representative and impartial as possible; the shipowners were again dissatisfied. They claimed—what was absolutely unusual and unprecedented in the formation of such a Commission—that the special interest concerned should be represented by five delegate representatives in addition to those I had already appointed. I say that the demand was absolutely unusual. At the same time, I did not offer opposition to it, and I did not object to it, except so far as I feared the delay which the extension of the numbers of the Commission would cause in its proceedings. It was to me a matter of no consequence at all whether there were five shipowners, or fifty, on the Commission. I have always believed that when the Report is published the public will look to the opinion of the impartial members of the Commission, and not to those who sit as the delegates of the interest chiefly concerned. The Commission was appointed; it has sat and taken a great deal of evidence; and now it has decided that, although its labours are not

nearly completed, the evidence, so far as it has gone, shall be made public."

Nor did Mr. Chamberlain intend that the promise of future legislation on Merchant Shipping should be a mere formality. Though the Report issued by this Commission in November 1885 could not be acted upon, another Commission—practically the same, though under another name—was appointed in 1886 (while Mr. Chamberlain was still a member of Mr. Gladstone's Third Administration), which published its recommendations in August 1887, when Lord Salisbury had been Prime Minister rather more than a year. In 1888 an Act was passed which was largely based on this Report, and carried through Parliament, at Mr. Chamberlain's instance, as part of the general Unionist understanding. It required that every merchant vessel should be provided with such boats, belts, and other life-saving apparatus as might best be adapted to securing the safety of passengers and crew. This was followed in 1892 by another Act, declaring that every ship with a submerged load-line was to be deemed "unsafe" within the meaning of the Act of 1876, and that such submersion should be reasonable and probable cause for detaining the vessel. It was also required that proper inspection should be held of the stores and water provided for the crews of British vessels. Two years later a general Act was carried, which consolidated previous legislation, and consisted of no fewer than 748 sections. It will be seen, therefore, that eventually Mr. Chamberlain succeeded in fulfilling no inconsiderable part of the task which he had set himself—more, perhaps, than he could have accomplished had he insisted, in 1884, on Mr. Gladstone accepting his offer of resignation.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE FRANCHISE AGITATION, 1883-1885

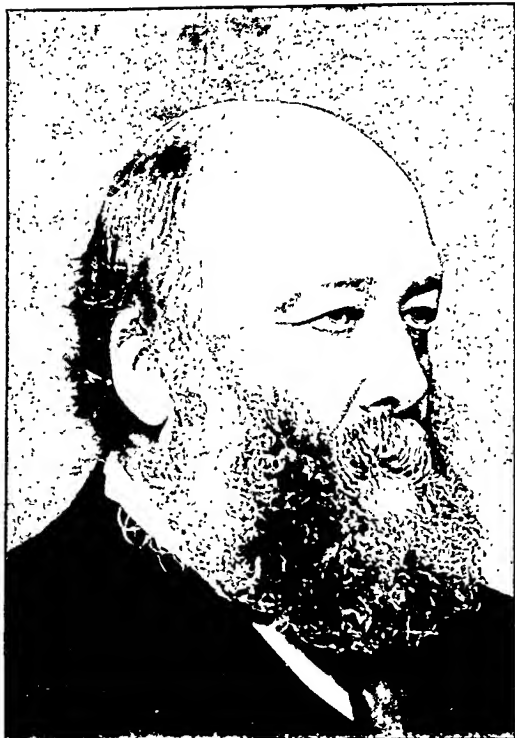
When Mr. Chamberlain was given office, the Conservatives in his Constituency hoped—or pretended to hope—that his Departmental labour would diminish his platform activity, and a cartoon of the period represented him as Too Busy to Talk. But no sooner had he got his work at the Board of Trade fairly in hand than he started on an energetic agitation for the enfranchisement of the agricultural labourer. This was a measure which had long figured in the list of future Liberal Reforms, but nothing had been done to carry it into effect. It was adopted by Mr. Gladstone as part of his understanding with the Birmingham Radicals, and in 1880 he made it an essential element in the Government programme. Indeed, it had been on this ground that Mr. Goschen, though not formally seceding from the Party, declined to join the new Administration. Naturally, however, it had been reserved for the closing years of the Parliament. Whether the scheme should succeed or fail, it would provide an equally good cry for the coming General Election. If the Bill were carried, the new voters might be expected to show some gratitude to the Party which had enfranchised them. If it should be lost, a vehement domestic agitation would help to cover the mistakes committed by Ministers in their Foreign policy. In the House of Commons the course of the new Reform Bill would be reasonably smooth. The possible defection of a few old-fashioned Whigs, like Mr. Goschen, would be more than compensated by the accession of the



#### FRANCHISE AGITATION, 1884-85

The plate shows four conspicuous protagonists in the Reform struggle of 1884-85: Robert Arthur Talbot Gascoyne-Cecil; third Marquis of Salisbury (1830-1903), afterwards three times Prime Minister; Sir Stafford Henry Northcote, first Earl of Iddesleigh (1818-87); Lord Randolph Henry Spencer Churchill (1849-94), the Tory Democrat leader; and Sir Charles Wentworth Dilke (born 1843). The conflict between the two Houses and the two parties was ultimately settled by a mutual compromise. The Redistribution scheme was drafted by Salisbury, Northcote, Gladstone, Hartington, Granville, and Dilke, the last being called in because of his mastery of the details. The outside agitation was enlivened by Mr. Chamberlain on the Liberal side and Lord Randolph Churchill on the Conservative side. Mr. Chamberlain and Lord Salisbury had some stirring rhetorical combats.

FRANCHISE AGITATION, 1884-1885



MARQUIS OF SALISBURY *Russell*



EARL OF IDDESLEIGH *Stereoscopic*



LORD RANDOLPH CHURCHILL *Elliott & Fry*



RT. HON. SIR CHARLES DILKE *Stereoscopic*



Tory Democrats" and of trimming Conservatives who thought more about the safety of their seats than consistency with their principles. The difficulty would lie with the House of Lords; and even in 1883, a year before the Bill was to be introduced, the Radicals set themselves, by anticipation, to denounce the natural sin of hereditary legislators. Mr. Chamberlain was foremost in the movement. Under his guidance the agitation for the enfranchisement of the agricultural labourer speedily became a campaign against the Landed Interest and the House of Lords. It was at Swansea on 1st February 1883, that he struck off one of those phrases which cling to his name—his denunciation of the class "who toil not, neither do they spin :—

"Lord Salisbury cares nothing for the bulk of the Irish nation. He calls for vengeance upon the criminals who have been guilty of outrage and violence, and so far I am with him. But then he stops there. He has no sympathy—at least he expresses none—for the great mass of the population, whether of loyal Ulster or the three other Provinces of Ireland, who have been subjected to undeniable tyranny and oppression, and whose wrongs cry aloud for redress. He can express to you in eloquent terms his sympathy for the Irish landlords, who have had to submit to a reduction of 25 per cent in their rents, but I find nowhere any expression of sympathy for poor tenants, who, for years, under the threat of eviction, and the pressure of starvation, have paid those unjust rents levied on their own improvements, and extorted from their desperate toil and hopeless poverty. I say that in this matter, as in so many others, Lord Salisbury constitutes himself the spokesman of a class—of the class to which he himself belongs—'who toil not, neither do they spin'—whose fortunes, as in his case, have originated in grants made long ago, for such services as courtiers render Kings—and have since grown and increased while their owners slept, by the levy of an unearned share on all that other men have done by



toil and labour to add to the general wealth and prosperity of the country of which they form a part."

Nothing, of course, would have been more convenient to the Radicals than for the Conservative Party to offer direct opposition to Franchise Reform. But it had been decided, under the guidance of Lord Salisbury, not to deliver a frontal attack, but to demand that the extension of Household Suffrage to the Counties should be accompanied by an equitable Redistribution of Seats. The two measures must proceed *pari passu*, and become law together. Otherwise, the Lords would throw out the Franchise Bill. On this Constitutional ground, the Conservative Party and the House of Commons would rest their case. It was no good, Lord Salisbury said, to talk about sweeping away the Peers. Mr. Bright had admitted that they could not be "swept away" except by their own consent. It might be possible to induce them to pass other Measures by threatening to abolish their power, but no threat could induce the House of Lords to vote its own abolition. "Fear of death will induce men to do other things, but it has never yet induced any man to commit suicide." The logical force of the argument could not be questioned. But Mr. Chamberlain did not believe—nor did the country generally think—that the Peers would stand by it. Nor did he agree with Mr. Bright, that the only method of getting rid of the Upper House was to obtain its formal consent to its own extinction. He would, no doubt, have sanctioned any method short of an appeal to force. He believed in moral pressure and public demonstrations. But he began with some show of moderation.

"We are engaged in a great contest," he said at Bristol in the course of the same year. "The battle will be hot, and every man will have an opportunity to win his spurs, and to prove his mettle. We are told that we must be prepared for the worst. The House of Lords will at the last moment exercise its Constitutional

prerogative, and will force a Dissolution. We are told that Lord Salisbury has determined on a Plebiscite. Well, I should like to point out to Lord Salisbury that an appeal to three-eighths of the nation—three-eighths of the adult males of the nation—against the claims and the rights of the remaining five-eighths is not an appeal to a Plebiscite; it is an appeal to a minority against a majority, and it has nothing in common with the French contrivance. But, passing that by, I am not afraid of an appeal even to the present limited electorate. No doubt, if Lord Salisbury chooses, he may take their opinion and yours upon the issue which he himself will have raised—the issue between the Peers and the People—between the privileges of the few and the rights of the many. The responsibility will be his; the results, I believe, will not be unsatisfactory to us. I am inclined to hope, in the words of the beautiful Church Litany which is read every Sunday, that the nobility may be ‘endued with grace, wisdom, and understanding.’ I trust that the House of Lords will have the ‘wisdom and the understanding’ to appreciate the justice of the claim which will be preferred to them, and I hope that Lord Salisbury will have the ‘grace’ to yield without provoking a conflict in which he cannot possibly be victorious.”

Mr. Chamberlain’s prayer for the House of Lords was an audacious sally which delighted his fellow Radicals, but it did not help them to dislodge the Conservatives from the strong position in which they had entrenched themselves. In the earlier part of the same speech, he had argued the question on general grounds:—

“Now, we are told by some of their leaders that the Tories have no objection to the extension of the Franchise in the abstract. They never have any objection to anything in the abstract! But that does not mean that they will give any particular support to it in the concrete. At the present moment they are chiefly curious to know what is our scheme of Redistribution. This thirst for

information is very creditable to their political sagacity. In the question of the Franchise you have a simple question which raises very few points of principle, and those are points which can be easily and quickly decided. It is a question on which you may say practically the whole Liberal Party are agreed. If you can only contrive to tack to it another question, very complicated and difficult, on the details of which difference of opinion may very naturally arise, then there is a chance that both questions may be got rid of together. We have had some painful experience in reference to this particular question. In 1866, under Lord John Russell, the Liberal Government brought in a simple extension of the Franchise Bill, and the same question arose. A 'cave' was formed in the Liberal ranks, and a Resolution was brought forward demanding that the Government should disclose their scheme of Redistribution. That Resolution was very nearly carried; the Government only obtained a majority of five. Accordingly, their hands were forced, and they were compelled to bring in a Redistribution Bill. The moment they brought in that Bill their majority of five was changed to a minority of eleven. They were beaten on an important amendment, they resigned, and the Tories came into office.

"You know what followed; Mr. Disraeli educated his Party, and gave us, with the assistance of Liberals in Parliament, Household Suffrage in the Boroughs and a great extension of the Franchise in the Counties; but the scheme of Redistribution was miserably inadequate—a perfect fraud on the Constituencies. It was accompanied by that three-cornered vote which has already destroyed political life in many of our counties and nullified the popular voice in some of our greatest towns. That experience is not encouraging for a repetition of it. For my own part, I am not credulous enough to believe that the Tory Opposition will be conciliated by any proposals for Redistribution which we can bring forward.

On the other hand, it would enormously strengthen their hands if we gave them all the opportunities for discussion and obstruction which a Redistribution Bill would involve. The two questions are, to my mind, independent and distinct. There are two benefits to be conferred on the people of this country, two wrongs to be redressed. The first is an injustice which is done to many of our fellow-countrymen who have no votes at all; the second is an injustice done to those who have votes and whose political influence is nullified by the excessive weight and power given to the smaller Constituencies.

“It may, and probably would, be impossible to carry both these Reforms in a single Session; but why not carry one of them? Why should we delay giving a vote to men who are absolutely at the present moment outside the pale of the Constitution, because we have not yet agreed among ourselves as to the machinery by which we will endeavour to estimate the proportionate weight and value of the vote which should be given? There is another argument in favour of separation. It is a practical argument; until you have given the vote, and until you have got the new register, it is absolutely impossible—there are no means at our disposal for knowing—what the numbers in the new Constituencies will be, and until we have that essential information how is it possible that any really satisfactory scheme of Redistribution can be prepared? Altogether, I would venture to submit that this is a matter, not in any sense of principle, but a matter of Parliamentary tactics. Those who are honestly anxious for Reform should do all they can to secure it step by step. Those who are opposed to Reform in any shape, but are afraid of saying so, will no doubt be very wise if they can contrive to jumble the two questions up together, so that the one that is plain and simple may be overlaid and stifled in the embraces of the one that is difficult and complex.

“But suppose that we have decided to introduce the

Franchise Bill alone, and to introduce it at the beginning of the Session, there still remain one or two important matters upon which it is right that the people of this country should make up their minds. In the first place, what is the extension to be? I observed the other day that Lord Salisbury said that for his part he was opposed to this perpetual tinkering with the Constitution. Well, I agree entirely with Lord Salisbury, and that is such a rare pleasure that I am inclined to make the most of it. But I believe that, unfortunately, although we are agreed upon the principle, we differ altogether as to the application of it. Lord Salisbury, I suppose, would avoid tinkering with the Constitution by letting the Constitution alone until it falls to pieces. I, on the contrary, would deal with the Constitution so effectually that it would never again require amending. I have never concealed my opinion—I have expressed it on many occasions—in favour of absolute Manhood Suffrage. As the basis of our electoral system, it would be of immense advantage in getting rid of difficulties about registration which have practically nullified the Lodger Vote in many large towns, and I believe it would be Conservative in the best and truest sense. The wider you lay the foundations of your liberties and institutions, the more stable those liberties and institutions will be. I have no fear of the people. I would desire to call in the largest possible number of them in order to share in the work and responsibilities of Government.

“But while I say this I am perfectly ready to admit that public opinion generally is not in favour of so considerable a change. In the large towns we are prepared for it. No doubt we see a good deal more of the people, and seeing them closer, we are not afraid of them. But in smaller places, and among a different class of people, prejudices exist which time alone can remove. If I am right in my opinion, time and experience will bring conviction to all those who now doubt. Every successive

alteration of the Franchise has been justified by its results; the next alteration, I doubt not, will also be justified in turn, and then it will lead naturally, and with common consent, to the change which I desire. But in the meantime I stand with the rest of the Liberal Party upon the question to which all are pledged, upon which all are agreed; and I will accept gratefully the extension of Household Suffrage to the Counties."

As the time approached for the introduction of the Bill, the controversy became more heated. On 16th January 1884, Lord Salisbury defined his attitude towards the Government Bill. Its text had not been published, but its general provisions were matter of public knowledge. Ministers had decided not to couple Extension of the Franchise with Redistribution of Seats. Therefore, he should oppose the Bill, and—he added—he did not think it would become law that year. As he had the power of making his threat good, the announcement of his purpose would have pointed to a stormy Session even if affairs in Egypt and the Soudan had not provided matter for acrimonious debate. It was not till the last day of February that the Prime Minister found an opportunity of explaining the proposals of the Government. "It was based on the broad principle laid down by Mr. Gladstone that the enfranchisement of capable citizens, be they few or many—and if they be many, so much the better—is an addition to the strength of the State."

This was unexceptionable; but in reducing one anomaly it increased another. It altered the balance of Parties in every County, yet did not attempt to re-arrange the Divisions in proportion to the population. This was admitted by Ministers, but they argued, plausibly enough, that one great Measure of this kind was enough for a single Session. The Redistribution Bill they promised for 1885. The reply of the Opposition was that, if the Franchise Bill were passed by the Lords in 1884, they would have no voice in deciding the nature of the Re-

distribution Bill in 1885. Should they throw out the latter Measure when the former had become law, Parliament might be at once dissolved, and the appeal made to Constituencies flooded with electors who owed their enfranchisement to Mr. Gladstone's Government. It cannot be denied that each side, from its own point of view, had a plausible case. There was no principle involved in the dispute—merely a question of tactics. Neither Party, it seemed, could afford to give way to the other. The more or less abstract arguments delivered in Parliament and elsewhere had little influence on men's minds.

Mr. Chamberlain's speech in the House of Commons on 27th March was chiefly interesting for the references to Lord Randolph Churchill, a politician who had then, perhaps, attained the height of his reputation, and for whom, in spite of many personal conflicts in the House of Commons and at Birmingham, he entertained a warm admiration:—

“I should like to quote the opinion of a Statesman who lived fifty years ago, and who took a great interest in the subject of Reform—the first Lord Durham. In 1836 he said:—‘It is the duty of a wise Statesman to examine the objects the people have in view and have determined to obtain, and when he is satisfied of their justice he should not wait to be forced to the adoption of such measures; he should not do it upon expediency or upon compulsion; but he should grant them freely and cordially, for a boon granted on compulsion loses half its grace and half its value.’ I have quoted that opinion of one of the elder generation of Statesmen because I want to contrast it with the opinion of one of our modern Statesmen—the latest product and most satisfactory development of that Tory Democracy of which we shall hear a good deal in the future, which is represented in this House by the noble lord the member for Woodstock (Lord R. Churchill). It is an utterance of the noble lord to which I propose to direct attention. I pay the greatest attention to everything he

says, for two reasons—first, because I believe he always says what he means, and means what he says; and secondly, because I find that what he says to-day his Leaders say to-morrow; they follow with halting steps, somewhat unwillingly, but they always follow him; they may not like the prescription he makes up for them, but they always swallow it. Speaking at Edinburgh on 19th December 1883, he said:—

“ ‘If I saw the agricultural labourers of Great Britain in a great state of excitement over this question, if I saw them holding vast meetings, collecting together from all parts of England, neglecting their work, contributing from their scanty funds, marching on London, tearing down the railings of Hyde Park, engaging the police, and even the military, I should say to myself: these men have great grievances which have not been represented in Parliament, or which have been neglected by Parliament, and they know that if they had the Franchise these grievances would be no longer neglected, but they would be represented and remedied. They have made up their minds to have the vote; they have shown pretty well they will know how to use it; and if we wish for peace, order, and stability, we must give it them. On these grounds only I consent to equalise the position of the agricultural labourer and the town artisan.’

“ ‘I must say that this is a very remarkable utterance, and it appears to me to be a direct incitement to outrage. If it had been made in Ireland by an Irish member, I feel certain that it would have been denounced from those benches as a direct provocation to crime and disorder. I am not quite certain whether the Government might not have found it necessary to prosecute. But all I can say is, that I protest absolutely and entirely against language of that kind, and I think it is a fatal lesson to teach the people of this country, or any class in this country, that the only way by which they can obtain redress of their grievances is by violence, pulling down railings, and en-



gaging the police. Although there has been no riot up to this time—nothing to satisfy the noble lord—yet I think there have been ample signs of the opinion of the country and of the interest taken in the question. The last Recess was distinguished above most Recesses by the activity of debate, and I must say that our opponents were more active than we were. I am not going to lay stress upon our meetings. You say they arose from a mere mechanical agitation. Meetings of thousands of representatives from all parts of the country, and meetings equally numerous in localities, are regarded as the creatures of the Caucus, while the meetings of the Constitutional Committee held in public-houses are recognised as the free and full expression of public opinion. They are the expression of public-house opinion, I have no doubt. But at these meetings, whether held in the open air or in public-houses, in not a single instance throughout the whole of the Recess has there been a solitary resolution passed condemning the Extension of the Franchise.

“Why, if the country cared nothing about the measure, do you not propound a Resolution calling upon Parliament to discharge this question and attend to other business? If honourable gentlemen are in doubt as to the feeling of the country upon this Measure, it will probably be removed before this discussion closes. We do not get up outrages to order, as the right honourable gentleman, the member for Cambridge University, amiably imputed to us. That is not to our interest. It has never been to our interest to do so, nor has it ever been our policy. At the time of the late Government I am not aware that any eminent member of the Conservative Party was ever molested or even insulted by his political opponents. It was not the Prime Minister’s windows that were smashed by the mob, but the windows of the right honourable gentleman who is now the Prime Minister of this country. I do not suppose that they were broken by any Liberal organisation. I have no doubt we shall be able to show the noble lord, the member

for Woodstock, and the right honourable gentleman, the member for Cambridge University, that the opinion of the country is made up in reference to this matter.

"The noble lord spoke of a blank cheque drawn for 'two millions'. That cheque is not drawn to my order. I am flattered by the good opinion the noble lord expresses of my influence; but his argument comes to this—he refuses to give the Franchise to any one who he is not certain will support the Conservative Party. The noble lord referred to the influence the honourable member for Cork would obtain. Now, I do not think the noble lord is serious in what he says with regard to me, but I have no doubt he is sincerely afraid of the honourable member for Cork. He described the honourable member for Cork as likely to become by this Bill the great electoral authority over four-fifths of Ireland. I confess this hardly describes the present position. Nobody denied the great influence the honourable member for Cork exercises over the Constituencies of Ireland, but I am certain that this Bill will make no material change in that influence. But, whether it does or not, unless the House is prepared to abandon all idea of a Constitutional treatment of the Irish question, and all idea of a Representative system in Ireland, it is better that the Representative system there should be a reality and not a mere imposition. Many of us do not like the opinions held by the majority of the Irish people, but we cannot suppress those opinions; and under these circumstances it is to our interest that those opinions, however unpopular, should at least be represented in this House, and we should permit the people of Ireland to bring their grievances to a Constitutional test, and not force them to modes of redress to which we are most seriously opposed.

"Agitation is always legitimate so long as there are grievances to be redressed, and the grievances of Ireland are great and urgent in this matter. In Great Britain, excluding Ireland, one-tenth of the population have votes

—in Ireland only one in every twenty-five; there are therefore two and a half times as many electors in Great Britain as there are in Ireland. The result is that the position of Ireland at the present moment with regard to the Franchise is worse now than was the position of England and Scotland before the Act of 1867. Ever since 1867 we have complained of the inadequacy of that Act for our purpose, but the Irish people have had to put up with a representation worse than that which existed before that measure became law. It is the merest folly to perpetuate inequalities of this kind, and those who attempt to maintain them are really the best friends the Irish agitators have. Our intention is clear; we have declared it in our speeches and in our Bill. Any one who looks at the Bill will see it would be very difficult to take Ireland out of it without reconstructing the Bill altogether, and that is an indication of our intention to stand by the Bill as it now appears. The honourable member for North Leicestershire referred to the demand made on the occasion of the Reform Bill of 1832. We also demand 'the Bill, the whole Bill, and nothing but the Bill,' and we will not accept a position which would further increase the anomalies and inequalities which now exist between the three Kingdoms, or which would maintain and perpetuate them."

Animated as the discussion appeared to be, from the beginning it was hollow. No objections that might be brought against the Bill by Conservatives in the House of Commons would shake the Liberal majority, and it was equally certain that the Measure would be rejected by the Peers. Still, the formalities of Parliament were duly observed. On the Second Reading Debate in the Lower House an Amendment was proposed by Lord John Manners that the Bill should not be further proceeded with until the Government had explained the full details of their Parliamentary scheme. This was, of course, defeated, the normal majority of Ministers being increased by the Nationalist vote. They had decided at the last moment to

include Ireland in the Bill, and, as Lord Salisbury politely put it, had thus "squared the Irish." But this success in the Lobby (340 against 210) did not alter the real state of the case, and in Committee the Prime Minister made no attempt to conciliate opposition—in any case the Bill could not pass that Session. "We must go straight to our point," he said, "and we decline to deviate either to the right or the left for the sake of introducing theoretical improvements."

A simulacrum of interest was created when the Third Reading Stage was reached, and Mr. Gladstone referred in significant terms to the impending conflict between the two Houses. He had no fear of the result, but trusted that the Peers would not bring about a collision which might have grave consequences. The attitude of Ministers was expressed in the words, "Beware of entrance to a quarrel, but, being in, bear't that the opposed may beware of thee." Impressive as the language was in form, and much as it gained from his delivery, it did not convey the idea that he was really braced up for an assault on the Upper House. It is no secret that his attitude caused dissatisfaction among the more combative Radicals represented by Mr. Chamberlain. They were "spoiling for a fight," and Mr. Gladstone was determined to hold them back as long as he could. The Conservatives treated his vague menaces with open contempt, and Mr. Arthur Balfour remarked that it would not be worth while to lift a finger in defence of the House of Lords if it were not considered capable of giving its opinion on a great Constitutional question.

When the Bill reached the Peers they made short work of it. An Amendment, identical in substance with that which had been defeated in the Lower House, was moved by Lord Cairns and carried by 205 against 146 votes. The minority represented a practically full muster of the Liberal Peers, while the Conservatives, if they had cared, might have almost doubled their majority. It was

suggested by some of the Peers who had parted company with Mr. Gladstone, but had not broken with their Party—like the late Duke of Argyll and Lord Cowper—that the principle of the Government Bill should be accepted by the Lords lest that House might get the reputation of being hostile to Reform, or should seem to claim the right of forcing a Dissolution. Their arguments were supported by Lord Rosebery and Archbishop Tait, who remarked that the Church trusted the people. Lord Salisbury—on whom an amiable platitude always acted as a red rag on a bull—retorted that the Church had no monopoly either of admiration for the working man or of the desire to secure his political advancement. He declined to recognise the existence of a Constitutional crisis, ignored the menaces directed against the House of Lords, and insisted on discussing the Bill as if it were quite an ordinary Measure. As for the promise of the Government to introduce a Redistribution Bill in the following Session, that would not meet the views of the Conservative Party. They wanted not a Bill, but the power of modifying an unjust one. The whole controversy could be terminated if the Government wished. They need only insert in their Franchise Bill a Clause providing that it should not come into operation until a Redistribution Bill had been passed. He wound up with a characteristic scoff at the high-falutin' language of the Radicals. There was a legend, he said, that the Houses of Parliament had been built by the water so that the Conservatives might escape in penny steamboats if the people should rise against them. As for the solemn warning administered by Dr. Tait, he mentioned that, in the agitation of fifty years before, the Archbishop of Canterbury had been obliged to depart by a back door, because he had voted against Reform—a fact which might, perhaps, account for the alacrity with which his successor had supported the present Measure.

The mockery of the Conservative Leader — “very

ill-judged it was," said the wiseacres on both sides, "in the presence of a great national crisis"—was especially irritating to Liberals who were at all behind the scenes. So much had been threatened, so little could be done. With admirable tactical skill, the two Parties had been manœuvred into inexpugnable positions. Neither could be dislodged, but neither could advance. They were like the two goats meeting on a plank too narrow for either to pass the other. This suited the Conservatives very well: they were content to remain on the defensive, and defy their enemies to "come on." But for the Liberals inaction was defeat. The only way out of an awkward position, urged the Radicals, was to give the word for an attack in force on the House of Lords. This, however, was a movement of which it was understood that Mr. Gladstone was not prepared to be the leader, and without him it was hopeless.

A meeting of the Liberal Party was convened at the Foreign Office on 10th July, and Mr. Gladstone announced that while the Bill was still under discussion in the House of Lords an offer of compromise had been made to the Conservative Leaders. The Government had privately intimated that they were willing to propose an identical Resolution, both Houses declaring that "each House had passed the Bill in reliance on the promise of the Government to introduce a Redistribution Bill next Session, and to embody this Resolution in an Address to the Crown, so that all three elements of the Legislature would be in possession of this pledge." This had been refused by Lord Salisbury, who had declined, Mr. Gladstone said, to "discuss the Redistribution Bill with a rope round his neck." What had happened—as appeared from the personal controversy which subsequently arose—was that Lord Granville had been sent with this proposal to Lord Cairns, who had asked him to put it into writing. When this had been done, the Conservative Leader's reply was that he would accept, not a Resolution of both Houses,

but an Amendment forming part of the Bill, either to the effect that the Bill should come into operation (1) on a day to be named in a subsequent Act of Parliament, or (2) on 1st January 1886, unless an earlier date were named in an Act of Parliament to be passed next Session. This reply Mr. Gladstone and Lord Granville had interpreted as a refusal of their offer, and in this view they were, no doubt, justified, though the answer left it open to them to resume negotiations.

No reference to this affair had been made in the Debate in the House of Lords, and the Conservative Leaders complained bitterly that Mr. Gladstone had made a public disclosure of what they had understood to be confidential communications. Lord Cairns protested that he would "sooner have cut off his hand" than speak of them without permission, and Lord Salisbury said that the fight was being conducted with "poisoned weapons." Moreover, it was an "utter fabrication" to say that he had used such language as Mr. Gladstone had put into his mouth, and in this repudiation he was borne out by the recollection of Lord Cairns. It must be confessed, however, that the picturesque phrase accurately represented the position which on more than one or two occasions he had taken up and defended.

The personal issue was not very important. The significant point was that not only had Mr. Gladstone been anxious to arrange a peaceful compromise with the Conservatives, but also wished it to be known that such had been his disposition. At the risk of giving offence to the Radicals, who were clamouring to be led against the Peers, he decided that the better policy was to exhibit himself to the country as a moderate-minded Statesman who, before all things, desired to avoid interference with our ancient institutions. Nor was this attitude—which did, indeed, correspond with his real feeling—altogether unsuccessful. Believing that the Prime Minister's overtures had been rejected without sufficient reason, and not unwilling to

undermine the authority of Lord Salisbury in the Conservative Party, Lord Wemyss arranged a small "cave" in the Upper House, and proposed at a Party Meeting, held on 15th July, that the Bill should be reconsidered by the Peers in a special Autumn Session. Lord Salisbury, of course, fought against this compromise, and when Lord Wemyss's Resolution was brought forward on the 17th, it was defeated by a large majority. This was the end of Mr. Gladstone's attempt to settle the dispute by private or semi-private negotiations. He stood aside, therefore, and let the Radicals "go in."

On 21st July, a Grand Reform Demonstration was held in London; a large number of men, estimated by different observers at any number between 25,000 and 250,000—some of them agricultural labourers brought up from the country—assembled on the Thames Embankment, and marched along Parliament Street, Whitehall, Charing Cross, Pall Mall, and Piccadilly, to Hyde Park—hooting the Enemies of Liberty whom they saw sniggering from the Club windows on the line of route. Lord Salisbury was not the man to spare his ridicule. Speaking at Sheffield next day, he declared that the Lords had only done their duty in preventing Ministers from manipulating the Constituencies for their own advantage. The existing House of Commons was the most servile ever assembled at Westminster—servile to Mr. Gladstone, and servile to the Caucus. Ministers dared not appeal to the country on their quarrel with the Lords, because they would have to face a reckoning for all their mismanagement of affairs both at home and abroad—deluded hopes, broken promises, unnecessary bloodshed, injury to national power and prestige, a distracted Empire, and a discontented Ireland. Now they were descending to the streets and asking for processions. They imagined that 30,000 Radicals going to amuse themselves in London would be taken as the opinion of the country. A Party might speak by processions and demonstrations: a nation could only speak at



the polling booths. Any attempt to substitute a counterfeit voice manufactured by the Caucus would be indignantly repudiated when the people had an opportunity of using their real voice.

Lord Salisbury's references to the Caucus were meant and accepted as a direct challenge to Mr. Chamberlain, who was now the recognised Leader of the agitation, the fighting General, more or less under the orders of the Prime Minister. He was the Osman Digna, it was said, to Mr. Gladstone's Mahdi. He lost no time in making his reply to Lord Salisbury's attack. At the Devonshire Club, on the following evening, he delivered one of his most characteristic speeches:—

"Lord Salisbury," he said, "devoted himself last night to explaining his contempt for the great demonstration which filed past these windows last Monday—the most remarkable demonstration, I believe, which has been known in the history of Europe. What is his complaint of it? He says it was so orderly, so good-tempered, so good-humoured. Does he wish that future demonstrations should be otherwise? I wish, when he next speaks, that he would be a little more explicit, and tell us what kind and what amount of violent pressure he requires, and what is the nature of the demonstration that will convince him of the unwisdom of further resistance. Speaking as he did at a great Party Meeting at Sheffield, limited by ticketed invitations, as all such Meetings are, he thought fit to denounce the opinion of the streets, and to declare that it was manufactured by the Caucus. I expect Lord Salisbury would be very glad to know the secret of the manufacture. Lord Salisbury denouncing the Caucus—Lord Salisbury, who is the chief and patron of the Conservative organisation of whose internal proceedings we have had so much information lately, owing to Party dissensions—Lord Salisbury denouncing the machinery by which he does not scruple to profit—that is a spectacle more edifying than anything since Satan was seen denouncing sin.

“You have all seen, no doubt, the amusing Circular which proceeded a few days ago from the Central Conservative Association, over which I believe Lord Salisbury presides, and in connection with which, at all events, he is a leading spirit. In this Circular the secretary of the Central Conservative Association urges all local Centres and local Clubs not to hold public meetings—he is too wise for that—but to meet *in camera*, and to pass one or other of a batch of Resolutions which this universal provider of machine-made agitation and opinion offers to their choice. His stock is of the most varied character, to suit all tastes and circumstances, and adequate for every contingency. He has Resolutions which express cordial appreciation of the extension of the Franchise, and others which avoid all mention of that delicate subject. He has Resolutions emphatically approving the patriotic action of the House of Lords, and other Resolutions indignantly condemning the perfidy and misgovernment of Her Majesty’s Government. All this cordiality and emphasis of indignation is sent out wholesale from the stores at St. Stephen’s Chambers, to be returned by the halfpenny post as the free expression of an uncontrollable manifestation of popular emotion.

“I want to call your attention to the fact, that not only has the Franchise Bill been rejected, but Lord Salisbury, who is the author of that great blow to popular representation, adds insult to injury. He insults our intelligence by asking us to believe that his action is really dictated by his friendship to the principle of the Measure. We are asked seriously to accept from him the assurance that this chastening process to which we have to submit is really the result of an unalloyed love which the Tories have for popular representation, and that if the Bill has been stifled in the House of Lords, this has been due to the embraces of its too ardent admirers.

. . . . .  
 “Well, gentlemen, there is another argument which,

to my mind, is conclusive against our acceptance of Lord Salisbury's protestations of his desire for the extension of the Franchise. He says that he insists upon an appeal to the country. What country does he want to appeal to? If he trusts the people, and, above all, if he trusts those two millions of capable citizens who are now waiting for their enfranchisement, why does he seek to exclude them from the appeal which he wishes? Their capacity is no longer in question. All Parties acknowledge that they are entitled to their political rights. Why, then, should they not be allowed to take their proper place in the tribunal to which in the last resort an appeal is to be made? Lord Salisbury desires, for reasons which every one can understand, to appeal to a limited electorate. He wants to appeal to the three millions who have the vote against the two millions who have it not—to the twelve-pounder in the counties against their less fortunate fellow-citizens—to the farmers against the labourers, to the residents in the villas against the population who dwell in the suburbs. He wants the three millions of the present voters to be allowed to decide in what way, and to what extent, and under what conditions, the new voters shall come into their Constitutional rights. 'Oh, but,' he says, 'I do not object to the Franchise; I only object to the Franchise without Redistribution.' Well, he suspects us, it appears, of a desire so to manipulate the Constituencies as to gain a great Party advantage. I dare say his own experience suggests a foundation for such a suspicion. I do not complain of it; I heartily reciprocate it. I think we have better reason for suspecting the Party which gave us the sham and fraudulent Redistribution of 1867 than the country has for suspecting the Party which gave the great and generous Measure of 1832.

"But assume for a moment that he is right—assume that the Government is animated by the motives which he does not hesitate to ascribe to us—even then, I ask, why does he fear to allow those two millions of capable

citizens to have a voice in the settlement of this question? But no; he shows his trust in the People by refusing to allow them any voice whatever in a matter which is of the greatest concern to them. He will not trust them with the Vote unless he can be assured beforehand that they will only exercise it under conditions which will leave unweakened the existing sources of authority and power. He will delay this great boon, if he is allowed to do so, until he can nullify its advantage and minimise its value. I do not think it is necessary to press the argument any further. One great advantage from this agitation upon which we are entering is that we shall educate the new voters before they are called upon to exercise their political rights. They will learn to distinguish their friends from their foes. They will not be slow to see the difference between Tory professions and Liberal performances."

Not for many years had platform oratory been so copious and truculent as it was in the early autumn of 1884. If Lord Salisbury was the most exasperating speaker on his own side, Mr. Chamberlain on the other was most menacing in tone. One of his best-known utterances was delivered at Denbigh on 20th October. It was not merely an indictment of the Peers: it was also interpreted as an attack on Landed Property, and it contained the often-quoted and frequently misquoted "Doctrine of Ransom":—

"Are the Lords to dictate to us, the People of England? Are the Lords to dictate to us the laws which we shall make and the way in which we shall bring them in? Are you going to be governed by yourselves? Or will you submit to an Oligarchy which is a mere accident of birth? Your ancestors resisted Kings and abated the pride of Monarchs, and it is inconceivable that you should be so careless of your great heritage as to submit your liberties to this miserable minority of individuals who rest their claims upon privilege and upon accident. I saw the other day that Sir Stafford Northcote, when speaking in

the North, said that I never spoke about the House of Lords without showing that I was animated by spite against that Assembly. I must say I think that a very unnecessary observation, and if I had not great respect for Sir Stafford Northcote I should say it was a very silly one. Why should I have any spite against the House of Lords? I have always thought that it was a very picturesque institution, attractive from its connection with the history of our country. I have no desire to see dull uniformity in social life; and I am rather thankful than otherwise to gentlemen who will take the trouble of wearing robes and coronets, and who will keep up a certain state and splendour which is very pleasing to look upon. They are ancient monuments, and I, for one, should be very sorry to deface them; but, gentlemen, I do not admit that we can build upon these interesting ruins the foundations of our Government. I cannot allow that these antiquities should control the destinies of a free Empire; and when they press their claims without discretion and without moderation, when they press them to an extreme which their predecessors never contemplated, I say they provoke inquiry and controversy which cannot but end in their humiliation. I have read somewhere the saying of a certain Rumbold, who was a Puritan soldier in the time of the Stuarts, to the effect that he would believe in hereditary legislators when he found that men were born into the world, some of them with saddles on their backs, and others with bits and spurs ready to ride them. That is a condition which has not yet been fulfilled, and I do not think that the men who desire to preserve the authority of the Peers are wise if they push that authority so far as to set people thinking what grounds we have for giving them any authority at all, and how they have used the authority they at present possess.

. . . . .  
 "Now, the American Senate does not rest upon hereditary privileges. It is an elected assembly and,

therefore, it is evident that Lord Salisbury in his secret heart—for I cannot help thinking this expression dropped out from him unawares—is willing at once to abandon hereditary rights as a condition for the formation of a Second Chamber. Then, gentlemen, he and I are at one. The Tory Peer and the Radical Commoner are agreed, although I think we should differ seriously when we came to consider what substitute should be found for an Assembly which Lord Salisbury is willing to abolish. But it follows from this, that if Lord Salisbury is leading the Peers to their ruin he is doing it with his eyes open. He is, I suppose, so powerful a man that he feels ashamed to rest his claims to public influence upon inherited accident. I admire that tone of mind. I am glad to see that if he be pulling the House of Lords about his ears he has no regard of the consequences. I wonder what his fellow Peers think of this. They are not all of them so well able to take care of themselves as Lord Salisbury is. And I wonder whether they will find compensation for their extinction in the fact that their Leader will appear in the disguise of an American Senator. I hear a gentleman say, 'That is their affair, not ours.' Our business, gentlemen, is, in view of the pretensions which have been put forward in their name, to examine how they have fulfilled the trust which has been reposed in them up to the present time.

"I have asked again and again in the course of this controversy, and I have never been able to get an answer, what single contribution the Peers have made to the national progress and liberty. The only reply I have had was from an Irish Peer, and he referred me to Magna Charta. That is a long way back to go for a character. I think we may call for some later testimonials. We, however, call in vain. The chronicles of the House of Lords are one long record of concessions delayed until they have lost their grace, of rights denied until extorted from their fears. It has been a history of one long contest

between the representatives of Privilege and the representatives of Popular Rights, and during this time the Lords have perverted, delayed, and denied justice until at last they gave grudgingly and churlishly what they could no longer withhold. In the meantime what mischief has been wrought, what evils have been developed that might have been stayed in their inceptions, what wrongs have been inflicted and endured that ought long ago to have been remedied! We are told that the object of the Second Chamber is to stay the gusts of popular agitation and to give the nation time for reflection. I defy any student of history to point to one single case in which the House of Lords has ever stayed the gust of public passion, or checked a foolish popular impulse. They have given us time for reflection often enough, and the only result of that reflection has been to excite feelings of regret and indignation at the waste of time, and at the obstacles which have been unnecessarily interposed between the nation and some great and useful public reform.

“ Now, gentlemen, I turn to the last point upon which I propose to address you. What is to be the nature of the domestic legislation of the future? I cannot help thinking that it will be more directed to what are called social subjects than has hitherto been the case. How to promote the greater happiness of the masses of the people, how to increase their enjoyment of life, that is the problem of the future; and just as there are politicians who would occupy all the world and leave nothing for the ambition of anybody else, so we have their counterpart at home in the men who, having already annexed everything that is worth having, expect everybody else to be content with the crumbs that fall from their table. If you will go back to the early history of our social system you will find that when our social arrangements first began to shape themselves, every man was born into the world with Natural Rights, with a right to a share in the great inheritance

of the community, with a right to a part of the land of his birth. But all those rights have passed away. The common rights of ownership have disappeared. Some of them have been sold; some of them have been given away by people who had no right to dispose of them; some of them have been lost through apathy and ignorance; some have been destroyed by fraud; and some have been acquired by violence. Private ownership has taken the place of these communal rights, and this system has become so interwoven with our habits and usages, it has been so sanctioned by Law and protected by custom, that it might be very difficult and perhaps impossible to reverse it. But then, I ask, what ransom will Property pay for the security which it enjoys? What substitute will it find for the Natural Rights which have ceased to be recognised? Society is banded together in order to protect itself against the instincts of those of its members who would make very short work of private ownership if they were left alone. That is all very well, but I maintain that society owes to these men something more than mere toleration in return for the restrictions which it places upon their liberty of action.

“There is a doctrine in many men’s mouths, and in few men’s practice, that Property has obligations as well as rights. I think in the future we shall hear a great deal more about the obligations of Property, and we shall not hear quite so much about its rights.”

These and similar phrases which Mr. Chamberlain threw off—sometimes in the heat of controversy, but more often as the expression of deliberate opinions—were greeted with delight by the Conservatives, who pointed to them as the *reductio ad absurdum* of Radical principles. Moreover, they awakened a corresponding disquietude among Moderate Liberals, who did not care to be associated with such theories as those which Mr. Chamberlain was promulgating. Nor did they see that any progress was being made in bringing the House of Lords to a more



accommodating temper. The Prime Minister himself, who leaned towards compromise if he could but escape confession of defeat, was coming round to their way of thinking. It was, no doubt, with his authority that Lord Hartington, speaking at Rawtenstall on 4th October, had thrown out the first hint of an altered policy. It was, he said, "not impossible" that the Franchise Bill should be associated with a Redistribution Bill if the Peers—on seeing the draft of the latter Measure and being satisfied that it was reasonable—would reconsider the former. It was in accordance with Party etiquette that Lord Hartington should add that his suggestion was "quite unofficial," though he thought that in his opinion it contained "some of the elements of a compromise."

But this was not compromise. It was surrender. What Lord Hartington was now offering was exactly what Lord Salisbury had demanded—exactly what the Radicals had declared should never be conceded. They had been agitating up and down the country against making any terms with the Conservatives, and declaring that, rather than give way, they would destroy the House of Lords—either mend it or end it. But, humiliating as the position was, there seemed to be no way out of it. Unless something quite unforeseen were to occur, there was nothing to be done but to disguise, so far as possible, the completeness of the defeat—to raise a cloud of dust, and retire with all convenient despatch. It was not very glorious strategy, but, to all appearance, there was no alternative. Mr. Chamberlain, therefore, speaking at Hanley on 7th October, protested that it was impossible to yield to "Lord Salisbury's arrogant proposals"—so long as he maintained his present attitude. It was impossible to have any transactions with a Statesman whose attitude was so overbearing. But there were moderate men among the Tories who would follow him no longer if they were satisfied that the Redistribution Bill to be proposed by the Government was an equitable scheme. Every atten-

tion should be paid to such men: they would be given every information and assurance which they could fairly require. Ministers, however, must not jeopardise the Franchise Bill. "The prime condition must be—the Franchise Bill shall be passed. We cannot play with the rights of two millions of people. We cannot tamper with the hopes that have been excited. It is said that the Lords will not give way. Then, I say, neither will the people submit."

As a matter of fact, the concession which was to be made to the "moderate Tories" could not be made without also making it to Lord Salisbury, and the favour to be accorded to them was the very limit of his demands. Nor was it likely that the Lords would refuse to "give way"—they were to get their own way! Of this nobody was more painfully aware than Mr. Chamberlain himself. Yet it was only natural that, as "a first-class fighting man"—who detested the surrender that seemed inevitable—he should try to veil the real nature of the intended operation. The speech was an ingenious display of rhetoric. Probably it satisfied himself no more than it comforted his followers.

Just when it seemed that the Radicals would have to confess defeat, they were enabled, by an opportune accident, to escape from an open discomfiture. The Bill never was communicated either to Lord Salisbury or to the Moderate Tories. It was published to the whole country. On the very morning after Mr. Chamberlain's defiant declaration, *The Standard* printed the full text of the Government measure. Technically, it was not the Bill: it was only the draft which had been framed by the small Committee—Lord Hartington, Sir Charles Dilke, and Mr. Shaw Lefevre—to whom the Cabinet had entrusted the task. That the document was absolutely authentic was at once made plain by the guarded terms of the official disclaimer. It was, in fact, the text of the scheme which the Government intended to propose to

Parliament, though it had not yet received the formal and collective approval of the Cabinet.

Everybody was satisfied. Lord Salisbury and the Conservatives had obtained all they desired, and they had obtained it without the Liberals having been obliged to concede it formally. How the information came to light was a question that excited much curious speculation, but both Parties were rejoiced that the crisis had been amicably disposed of.

The new controversy which arose on the merits of the Bill itself, sharp as it became, was comparatively unembarrassing. It merged seventy-two small Boroughs into County Divisions; reduced Boroughs below 40,000 population from double to single representation; gave 54 new members to the Counties, and 47 to various large towns, including 25 to London; extinguished the three-cornered Constituencies except the City of London, and broke up some of the great Constituencies into several Divisions.

Lord Salisbury said that the scheme aimed at reducing the power of rural districts, which already were insufficiently represented, and renewed his declaration that the Lords would not pass the Franchise Bill unless the Redistribution Bill were largely amended. This, of course, was the signal for renewed strife, the principal speakers being Sir William Harcourt, Mr. Chamberlain, and Sir Charles Dilke, on one side, against Sir Stafford Northcote and Lord Randolph Churchill on the other. Lord Salisbury remarked that Ministers asked for a blank cheque, and in return offered an unsigned one. Lord Hartington replied that the Opposition refused to pass an equitable Franchise Bill unless they could get a Redistribution Bill that would suit their convenience. But, in spite of these and similar polemical exercises, it was clear, when Parliament met on 23rd October, that the fighting was practically over. Mr. Arthur Balfour had been commissioned to arrange terms with Lord Hartington, and the Government agreed to take the Opposition into con-

sultation with them on the Redistribution Bill. Upon this understanding, Lord Salisbury promised to support the Franchise Bill in the House of Lords.

The Independent Radicals did not disguise their *chagrin* at the arrangement which had been concluded. Mr. Labouchere, in the House of Commons, taunted the Prime Minister with having submitted to the dictates of the Peers, and moved a Resolution which aimed at readjusting the relations between the two Houses of Parliament. In effect and intention, though not in form, this was a censure on the Government, and it was remarked that Mr. Chamberlain and Sir Charles Dilke, though Members of the Cabinet, walked out of the House instead of voting with their colleagues.

The victory of Lord Salisbury had, indeed, been almost unqualified. It is true that he had given up his original demand that the two Bills should be proceeded with *pari passu*, but, on the other hand, he had contrived—what Ministers had opposed with equal obstinacy—that the one Measure should not be passed until a definite undertaking had been given as to the other. Speaking on the subject in Essex on 19th November, he admitted that the Conservatives had to rely on the good faith of the Government, but on this point they felt no misgivings—they were dealing with English gentlemen who were quite incapable of paltering with their pledged word. On 1st December the Redistribution Bill, which had been settled between delegates of the two Front Benches, was introduced into the House of Commons, and four days later the Franchise Bill was read for the third time by the Peers. For various reasons which need not be recalled in this connection—the foreign complications in which Ministers were involved, and the factious quarrels that sprang up among some of the Opposition Leaders—the progress of the Redistribution Bill was delayed in the House of Commons, and did not receive the Royal Assent till 25th June 1885—nearly a fortnight after the resignation of Mr. Gladstone and his colleagues.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE RADICAL POLICY

In order to understand the anomalous position which the Liberal Unionists came to occupy between 1886 and 1892—supporters of Lord Salisbury but not represented in his Administration—it is necessary to explain at some length the course followed by Mr. Chamberlain in 1884 and 1885. At the very time when he was, unconsciously, making progress towards an offensive and defensive alliance with the Conservative Party, he was most actively engaged in denouncing their principles and deriding their traditions. When the speeches have been examined which he delivered in this period, the wonder will be, not that it was impossible for him to become a member of a Coalition Government, but that he was able to arrange and observe a practicable *modus vivendi*. Never was he more enthusiastic, or more aggressive, in his Radicalism than within a few months of the time when he was to part company with most of his old associates. No excuse is required for the copious quotations that will be made in this chapter. Mr. Chamberlain's speeches are always "good reading"—especially for those who are able for the time to lay aside their political prepossessions. Those which he made while Mr. Gladstone's Second Administration was tottering towards its final collapse, and during the brief and precarious rule of Lord Salisbury's first Cabinet, were almost as much dreaded by Liberals as they were denounced by Conservatives. But they were universally read, they were written about and talked about, and, if

they raised him to what many regarded as a "bad eminence," they gave him an assured place in public life. Henceforth Mr. Chamberlain might be reprobated, but he could no longer be ignored—even by the most autocratic of Party Leaders. It would be untrue to say that he filled the same place in the popular mind as Mr. Gladstone—who, for good or evil, stood quite apart from the other politicians of the day—but on the Liberal side there was no man who attracted the same attention as Mr. Chamberlain. Lord Hartington, Mr. Goschen, and the rest derived no little of their importance from the belief that they might save the country and the Party from the Radical excesses threatened by the member for Birmingham; they were commended and supported, not because they lent active force to the Liberal movement, but because it was hoped that they might act as a drag on the collective pace. It was Mr. Chamberlain whom Lord Salisbury, in the vigorous campaign on which he now entered, singled out for attack. The struggle of Parties outside Parliament became something like a duel between these two equally incisive, and, in their different ways, equally effective antagonists: the controversy at one point became so acute that, although both evidently enjoyed the fray, it was almost impossible that their political hostility should not be sharpened by some personal feeling.

The right to lay down a Programme for the Liberal Party was ostentatiously disclaimed by Mr. Chamberlain—at Ipswich, for instance, on 14th January 1885. But, though still a member of Mr. Gladstone's Government, he was entitled, he thought, to define the terms on which he would continue to co-operate with the Party. There were certain social reforms which must not be excluded from consideration. He did not demand that any or all should be immediately adopted, but he did stipulate that no adverse decision should be delivered. This was the origin and explanation of what came to be known, later in the year, as the "Unauthorised Programme." It included

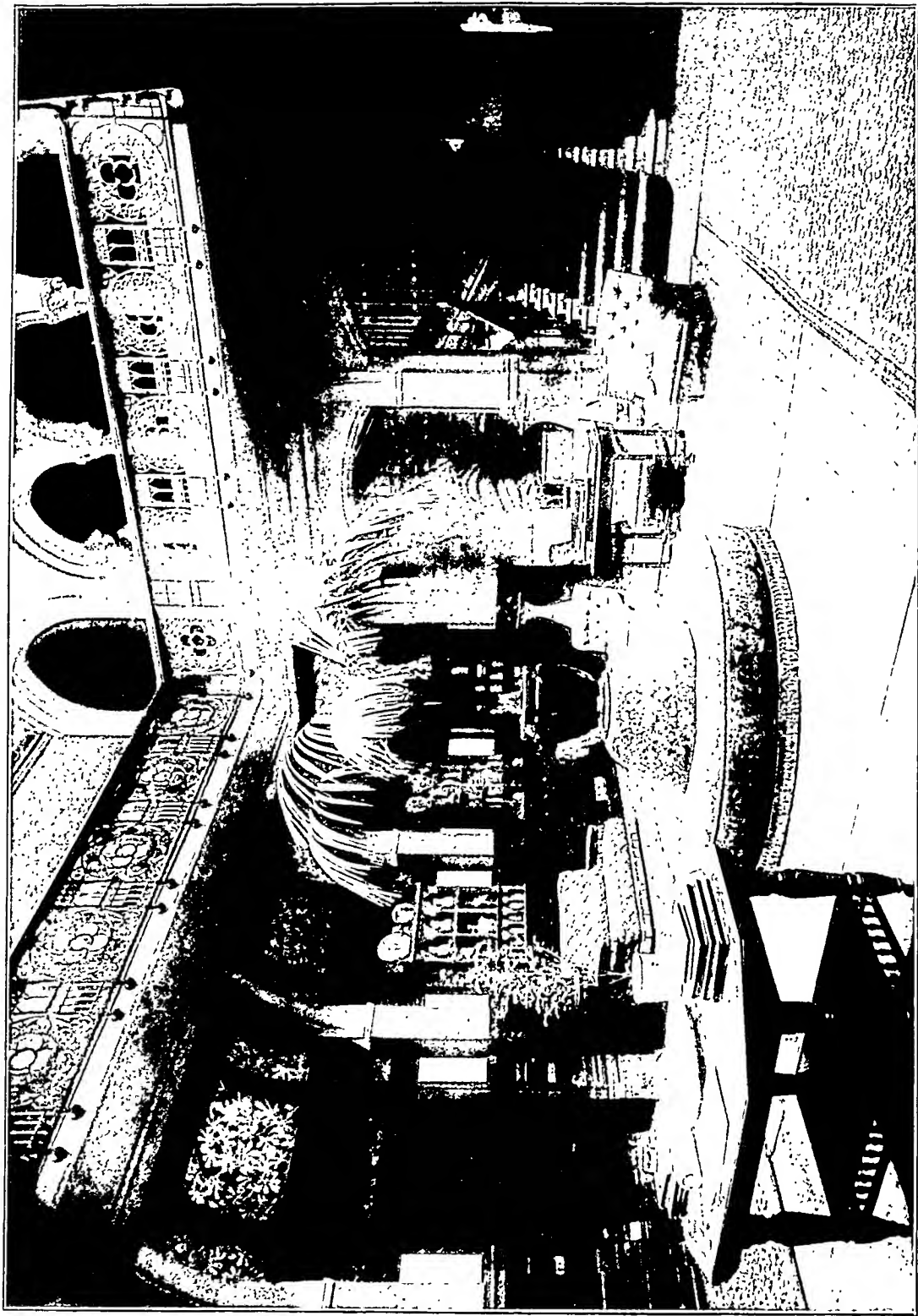
Free Education, Graduated Taxation, the establishment of Local Self-Government in the Counties, and the extension of facilities for acquiring Allotments and Small Holdings. He would not act, it was implied, with colleagues who refused to accept, at least, the principle of these Measures. Either the Whigs must advance to this point, or the Radicals would break away from them. But the four demands of the Unauthorised Programme did not exhaust Mr. Chamberlain's aspirations. So far as these have ever been defined, they will be found in "The Radical Programme"—a collection of unsigned articles which were collected and republished with a Preface by Mr. Chamberlain. They included Manhood Suffrage; Equal Electoral Districts; the Payment of Members of Parliament; the Disestablishment and Disendowment of the Church of England on terms less indulgent than had been conceded to the Church of Ireland; the creation of National Councils, though not separate Parliaments, for Scotland, Ireland, and Wales, for the management of internal affairs; the Progressive Taxation both of incomes and of realised property; sweeping reforms in Land Tenure; the "Restoration" of illegally enclosed lands to the community; the Improvement of Labourers' Cottages, Reconstruction of Insanitary Areas, and the Compulsory Purchase of Land for Cottages, and Free Education. It should be stated that the articles were not from Mr. Chamberlain's pen, but, on the whole, they represented his opinions, and he welcomed their appearance. While he expressly abstained from pledging himself to all the proposals contained in the book, he commended them to the "careful and impartial judgment" of his fellow Radicals—whom he described as "the most numerous section of the Liberal Party outside the House of Commons," and whom he expected to become "a powerful factor inside the walls of the popular Chamber." Nor was this compilation of "a definite and practical Programme for the Radical Party" intended to be a mere demonstration. "The stage of agitation has





### THE HALL, Highbury

A short corridor from the entrance leads into the hall, a large and lofty chamber in the centre of the house, giving access to the drawing-rooms, the study, the dining-room, and other apartments on the lower flat, and by an oak staircase to the gallery opening into the upper rooms. It has an oak floor, and is furnished with easy chairs and lounges, tables with books and magazines, plants and pictures.



WHITLOCK.

THE HALL, Highbury



passed," he declared, "and the time for action has come." New conceptions of public duty, new developments of social enterprise, new estimates of the natural obligations of the members of the community to one another, had come into view and demanded consideration.

In short, "The Radical Programme" was intended to be a direct Manifesto against the Old Whigs and Moderate Liberals, who still exercised, Mr. Chamberlain thought, an excessive influence on the councils of the Party. He had waited to issue it (July 1885) till he was released from Ministerial reticence by the defeat and resignation of the Gladstone Government, and had thus acquired a position of greater freedom and less responsibility.

If he stood on official *étiquette* with regard to "The Radical Programme," he had observed no such *punctilio* with regard to the Unauthorised Programme. Early in the year (14th January) he had made a definite demand for Free Education:—

"I think that we shall have to give a good deal more attention to what is called social legislation. We have a good deal to guide us, and much experience in that direction. Social legislation is not new. The Poor Law, for instance, is social legislation. It recognises that right to live which *The Times* now denies, and in itself is an endeavour on the part of a community to save themselves from the shame and the disgrace of allowing any of its members to starve. There are many people who propose to carry it further. We shall hear in these times of depression, I imagine, a good deal about State-aided Emigration. For my own part, I do not look on this proposal with much favour. I hope it may be possible to find work and employment for our artisans at home without expatriating them against their will. The Education Act is a second instance of social legislation, and one of the most beneficent and useful. It is an endeavour to put in the hands of all an instrument whereby alone advance in life has become possible. But we have not gone far enough.

We have made education compulsory, but we have omitted to make it free. And I hope that this great and necessary change will be one of the first matters to which reformers will direct their attention. On what ground do we now levy a fee? Education is given, because it is of advantage to the child, and because it is of advantage to the community, and the community ought to pay for it, and not the individual. We force a parent to give up the labour of his child at a time, perhaps, when it is almost necessary to the subsistence of the family. We ought not to go further and impose upon him a tax which is unfair, a tax proportioned not according to the ability of the parent to pay, but according to his necessities and wants. I cannot doubt that the example in this respect which has been set in the United States, in France, and almost throughout the Continent, will soon be imitated in our own country also."

More pointed and provocative was his reference to the newly enfranchised voters. Hitherto, he said, the great towns had exercised the chief influence on legislation. Now, the agricultural labourer had appeared on the political scene. What course he would follow, Mr. Chamberlain refused to prophesy:—

"The labourer is a sealed book even to those who live in his midst, but it does not appear to me that his lot is so happy that he is likely to be contented with it without trying for some improvement. The agricultural labourer is the most pathetic figure in our whole social system. He is condemned by apparently inexorable conditions to a life of unremitting and hopeless toil, with the prospect of the Poor House as its only or probable termination. For generations he has been oppressed, ignored, defrauded, and now he will have to be reckoned with. The inarticulate voice will find expression, and we shall learn from his own lips, or from those of his representatives, what are his wants, and how he thinks to supply them. I have read somewhere of an incident on board a great passenger

steamer. When the vessel was a few days out a man came to the captain and said, 'Captain, I want a berth.' 'Why,' said the captain, 'want a berth now? Where have you been all this time?' 'Oh,' said the man, 'I have been lying on a sick man, but he will not stand it any longer. He is getting well, and I have got to find another place.' The squire and the farmer, and sometimes the parson, have all been lying on the agricultural labourer; but he is getting well, and they will have to find some new position."

Some of the Conservatives had a remedy for Agricultural Depression—Mr. James Lowther and his friends thought they could put everything right by a five-shilling Duty on Corn—though it might occasionally be raised to ten shillings, and even sometimes to fifteen! Protection was, in fact, one of those quack medicines the failure of which was always attributed to the insufficiency of the dose. No, the farmers would not follow that will-o'-the-wisp. The time would come when they would demand—as the Scotch crofters had already demanded—the application to England and Scotland of the principles of the Irish Land Act.

"I confess that for myself I do not regard that prospect with alarm. I am not afraid of the three 'F.'s' in England, Scotland, or Ireland. But the main obstacle seems to me to be in the farmers themselves. It consists, in the first place, in the way in which they play into the hands of their landlords, and give them their support in propositions which would not be of the slightest advantage to the farmers themselves; and, in the second place, it is owing to the condition of existing tenancies. Most of our English farmers hold rather large farms. They have not sufficient capital, and they are dependent upon their landlords, sometimes as poor as themselves, for any improvements which it may be necessary to effect. As long as that is the case, fixity of tenure would not be of the slightest use to the farmer, who would find himself unable to fulfil

the obligations which independence of his landlord would entail."<sup>1</sup>

After referring (at Birmingham, 29th January) to the example of Lord Tollemache, who had divided an estate into a number of small farms with appropriate buildings and residences, and had found the experiment prove remunerative, he dealt with the objection that all landlords might not have the necessary capital for establishing such a system. "Well, then," he replied, "they must give place to those who have. That is why I have been anxious to call in the Local Authorities in every district, and to give them authority to take land at its fair value, and to incur expenditure in the pursuit of this enterprise. I do not think the Local Authorities would go too fast in the matter, and I do not think they would be likely to risk any considerable expenditure; but I believe that experiments would be made in many districts and under very many conditions, and that, at all events, the best of the labourers,

<sup>1</sup> These audacious utterances, and others of the same nature, were so much resented by some members of the Cabinet that the attention of the Prime Minister was formally drawn to the Socialist vagaries of his President of the Board of Trade. Mr. Morley tells us that in consequence of these representations Mr. Gladstone "made a lenient communication to the orator" and suggested that there "had better be some explanations among them when they met." Privately, to Lord Granville, he expressed himself somewhat more strongly. Though he thought that "weak-kneed Liberals" had given him more trouble than the Radicals, he regarded Mr. Chamberlain's declarations on "matters which could not become practical before the next Parliament" as having an ominous signification. The Opposition would be entitled, and even bound, to make them matter of attack. Such things, he added, would happen casually from time to time, but in this case there was "a degree of method and system" which gave them "a new character." In fact, Mr. Gladstone felt that his hand was being forced by his colleague, and did not relish the sensation. But he was determined, at all hazards, not to give the Radicals an excuse for breaking loose from the Moderate Liberals. Nor had his previous remonstrances with Mr. Chamberlain been so effective as might have been desired. He had been much annoyed, about eighteen months before, by the speech which Mr. Chamberlain had delivered at the Cobden Club. He complained to Lord Granville (see Morley's "Gladstone") that their colleague seemed to claim an "unlimited liberty of speech." A speech delivered at Birmingham, he said, showed "a total absence of recognition of the fact that he was not an individual but a member of a body." Moreover, if such liberty were claimed by one wing of the Cabinet why should not an equal privilege be asserted by the other wing. "Every extravagance of this kind puts weapons into the hands of opponents, and weakens the authority of Government, which is hardly ever too strong, and is often too weak already" (July 1, 1883).

the most active and the most energetic of the labourers, would find that natural craving which is implanted in all who have been connected with the land—that natural longing—gratified; and if the experiment were successful, it could easily have a larger development. In any case, I say that some experiment of this kind is a duty which the State owes to those who have been ousted by the action of the State or of individuals from their ancient right, and degraded to a condition which is so miserable that they fly from it on the first opportunity. I do not think that the landlords would themselves be losers by these experiments. Their chief interest in the matter is in connection with the value that would be paid for their property. I have said a fair value, and I admit that I do not think they have any right to expect to obtain for their land, either on sale or as rent, the extravagant sums that prevailed ten or fifteen years ago. But if they are unable to develop their property to the best advantage, if they cannot perform the obligations which attach to it, then I say they must be taught that their ownership is a trust which is limited by the supreme necessities of the nation, and they must give place to others who will do full justice to the capabilities of the land.”

These principles—which, in a modified shape, have since been adopted by Conservative legislators, though without conspicuous success in the direction contemplated by Mr. Chamberlain—were considered in 1885 something more than advanced. If they were associated with ideas of confiscation, the fault lay with Mr. Chamberlain. How could he expect that moderate men, whether Conservatives or Liberals, would give a patient hearing even to his more practicable proposals, when they were connected with the assertion of his “Doctrine of Ransom” a theory which he derived from the “Natural Rights of Man”—a fallacy derived from a fiction? Jack Cade had come back to life, cried the scandalised Tories! Tom Paine was preaching again!



"When our social arrangements first began to shape themselves," said Mr. Chamberlain, with the calm air of a lecturer instructing his class in the rudiments of knowledge, "every man was born into the world with natural rights—with a right to share in the great inheritance of the community, with a right to a part of the land of his birth." For these utterances he was misrepresented, he said, by *The Times*, denounced by Lord Salisbury, lectured by Mr. Goschen, scolded by the Duke of Argyll, and preached at by *The Spectator*. One of Mr. Goschen's phrases—he had called the Radical Party the "Salvation Army of Politics"—stuck for a time, and drew a well-known retort:—

"To scent out difficulties in the way of every reform—that is the congenial task of a man of the world, who coldly recognises the evils from which he does not suffer himself, and reserves his chief enthusiasm for the critical examination of every proposal for their redress, and for a scathing denunciation of the poor enthusiast who will not let well alone, and who cannot preserve the serene equanimity of superior persons.

" ' Well ! well, it's a mercy we have men to tell us  
The rights and the wrongs of these things, anyhow,  
And that Providence sends us oracular fellows,  
To sit on the fence and slang those at the plough.' "

"Mr. Goschen says that he has been told to stand aside. I do not know by whom—not by me. We cannot spare him. He performs in the Liberal Party the useful part of the skeleton at Egyptian feasts. He is there to repress our enthusiasm and to moderate our joy. But when he adopts another metaphor, and says he will swim against the stream, I admire his courage, but I have no confidence in his success; and I say he may as well attempt to swim up the Falls of Niagara as to stay the progress of the Democratic movement which he has already vainly resisted."

The Moderate Liberals were the especial object of Mr. Chamberlain's political animosity. These rather than the Conservatives he recognised as the enemy. Lord Hartington had delivered a formal attack on the Radical Programme.

"I know something of the Midland Counties in my own district" (said Mr. Chamberlain). "There is not a single Liberal candidate who has not accepted some one or more points of the Radical Programme. It is, therefore, perfectly futile and ridiculous for any political Rip Van Winkle to come down from the mountain on which he has been slumbering, and to tell us that these things are to be excluded from the Liberal Programme. The world has moved on while these dreamers have been sleeping, and it would be absurd to ignore the growth of public opinion and the change in the situation which the Reform Acts have produced."

At the banquet of the Eighty Club (28th April) he expressed unmeasured contempt for the "candid friends" who, as educated and thinking persons, reserved for themselves the duty of criticising the work in which their culture and refinement prevented them from taking part! "To hear some people talk, one would suppose that this is the best of all possible worlds, and that the only thing for a Liberal to do is to cultivate his own garden for himself. I do not think that the circumstances justify the optimism of *Candide*." Political Economy, it was true, had every reason to be satisfied with itself. The aggregate wealth of the country had increased beyond every possible expectation. Capital had accumulated. Trade had advanced with giant strides.

"That is one side of the picture. But continuously and concurrently with that there are always one million, or very nearly a million, of persons in receipt of Parish relief. There are more than one million others on the verge of pauperism, who, in times of depression like these, and at any moment of bad trade, are subject to the most

desperate privations. The whole class of the agricultural labourers of this country is never able to do more than make both ends meet, and they have to look forward in the time of illness or on the approach of old age to the workhouse as the one inevitable refuge against starvation. Tens of thousands of households do not know the luxury of milk. Children are stunted in their growth and dulled in their intellects for want of proper nourishment and proper food, and the houses of the poor are so scanty and insufficient that grievous immorality prevails, which seldom comes to the surface, but which is known to all those who move among the poor. The ordinary conditions of life among a large proportion of the population are such that common decency is absolutely impossible; and all this goes on in sight of the mansions of the rich, where undoubtedly there are people who would gladly remedy it if they could. It goes on in presence of wasteful extravagance and luxury, which bring but little pleasure to those who indulge in them, and private charity is powerless, religious organisations can do nothing, to remedy the evils which are so deep-seated in our social system."

If Mr. Chamberlain was bitter in his references to the Moderate Liberals, he was contemptuous of the new Conservative Government—the "Stop-gap Ministry" of Lord Salisbury—who were believed to be following, unwillingly enough, the lead of Lord Randolph Churchill, and who certainly were adopting and considering Measures which it would be difficult to reconcile with the principles they had previously professed.

"The consistency of our public life" (he said at Hackney on 24th July), "the honour of political controversy, the patriotism of Statesmen, which should be set above all Party considerations—these are things which in the last few weeks have been profaned, desecrated, and trampled in the mire by this crowd of hungry office-seekers who are now doing Radical work in the uniform

of Tory Ministers. There is one man, at least, whom we are bound to except from this general condemnation, and that is Lord Randolph Churchill. You may approve, or you may disapprove, of his policy, but you cannot deny that at least he has been pretty consistent. He was a Tory-Democrat in Opposition, and he is a Tory-Democrat in office; and, gentlemen, I will tell you that, while I see 'Democrat' writ large in his policy, the Tory appears to me to be in infinitesimal characters. Why, this man is doing, in the heart of the Tory citadel, with the rarest audacity and courage, the work we have vainly attempted to do from outside. I admire and I am amazed at his courage and at his success. I am amazed, but I have no admiration at all when I turn to his colleagues, Lord Salisbury, Lord Carnarvon, Sir M. Hicks-Beach, Sir Richard Cross, Mr. W. H. Smith, and all the rest of them, who are being dragged at the tail of Lord Randolph Churchill's policy. Meanwhile, the time-honoured traditions and principles of the Tory Party are trampled under foot and forgotten in the dust. I will say frankly that I do not like to win with such instruments as these. A Democratic Revolution is not to be accomplished by Aristocratic perverts, and I believe that what the People desire will be best carried into effect by those who can do so conscientiously and honestly, and not by those who yield their assent from purely personal or Party motives."

Mr. Chamberlain had gone so far—and the meaning of his words, extensive as it was, had been so stretched by angry commentators—that a few days later, speaking at Hull, he thought it wise to repeat a formal disclaimer which he had made several times before. "I am not a Communist," he said, "though some people will have it that I am. Considering the difference in the character and the capacity of men, I do not believe that there can ever be an absolute equality of conditions, and I think that nothing would be more undesirable than that we

should remove the stimulus to industry and thrift and exertion which is afforded by the security given to every man in the enjoyment of the fruits of his own individual exertions. I am opposed to confiscation in every shape or form, because I believe that it would destroy that security, and lessen that stimulus. But, on the other hand, I am in favour of accompanying the protection which is afforded to Property with a large and stringent interpretation of the obligations of Property."

How far he would go in Land Reform, he proceeded to define. He advocated the registration of titles, the abolition of settlements and entails, and of the custom of primogeniture in cases of intestacy. These made up what he called Free Trade in Land, and would do something to bring estates into the open market. But the farmer must also be entitled to have a Fair Rent fixed by an impartial tribunal, must be given Fixity of Tenure, and the Free Sale of his goodwill—"just like any other trader." If it was said that the English farmers did not ask for such advantages nobody would seek to impose on them benefits they did not want. But the labourers did know what they wished for. They required decent cottages and fair Allotments on equitable terms. There was no reason why a landlord should not be forced to meet these demands in the case of all the men required for the cultivation of his estate. The supervision of this duty should be left to the Local Authority, which should be empowered, in case of need, to acquire the land and let it out in Allotments and Small Holdings.

Such was the outline of the policy that soon became notorious under the name of "Three Acres and a Cow." Other items of the Agrarian Scheme were the expropriation of landlords who did not do their duty by the land, and restoring it to "production" (this was especially aimed at the owners of deer forests in the Scottish Highlands); unoccupied and sporting land should be "taxed at its full value"; finally, land which had been unjustly enclosed

and appropriated, and endowments which had been diverted to improper uses, should be reclaimed for public purposes, and against this demand of the State it should not be lawful to set up the plea of Prescription.

Into the Crofter agitation Mr. Chamberlain threw all his energy, speaking at Inverness on 15th September. On this subject his language was even less guarded and more liable to misconstruction than while he was engaged in the task—which he had recognised as practically hopeless—of whipping up the English farmers to a sense of injustice. “Let us look this fetish in the face,” he said; “let us examine these sacred Rights of Property; let us see on what they are founded; and let us see whether there ought not to be some limitation to the exorbitant pretensions with which they are accompanied. . . . I have sometimes speculated on what would have happened in this country if it had been possible to establish private property in air. I have no doubt that one of our Kings would have conferred a monopoly upon his favourites, and there would have been slaves willing to admit this monstrous pretension, and to submit their lives and the existence of their families to the caprice of a few privileged individuals. Lawyers would have lent their skill to weave a network and to forge a chain for the human race, and there would have been some pious and devout men who would have brought the sanction of Religion in aid of these monstrous pretensions. . . . I think that the time has arrived when it behoves us to see whether we cannot prevent the abuse of Property, and whether we cannot strictly define its Rights. I have said before, and I say to-night, that I am averse to all confiscation. I do not see why a sufficient remedy should not be found without any proceedings which can fairly be described as dishonest; but when I speak of confiscation I do wish the landlords would exercise a little reciprocity.” The extortion of exorbitant rents, taxing a tenant for his own improvements, invasion of public rights of way in the interest of sport—these were

acts of confiscation committed by the landlords. Were the public also to be robbed with impunity?

It did not trouble Mr. Chamberlain that his Programme shocked and alarmed the steady-going politicians. He delighted in the indignation he provoked!

"Lord Iddesleigh" (he said at the Victoria Hall on 24th September) "is so good-tempered, and he is such a courteous opponent, that I take in very good part the comparison he has endeavoured to institute between myself and Mr. John Cade. Gentlemen, knowing as I do of what Tory misrepresentation is capable, I am inclined to think that Jack Cade was an ill-used and much misunderstood gentleman, who happened to have a sympathy with the poor and the oppressed, and who therefore was made the mark for the malignant hatred of the Aristocratic and land-owning classes, who combined to burlesque his opinions and to put him out of the way."

The altercations between Lord Salisbury and Mr. Chamberlain were frequent and spirited—especially, as we have seen, on the Franchise agitation. The only point on which they were in agreement was mentioned by the member for Birmingham in June 1883. Both were inclined to think that social reform—though they meant very different things by that conveniently vague phrase—was more urgent than political legislation, and, even at the most Radical period in his career, Mr. Chamberlain admitted that in some respects the Conservatives had done more than the Liberals for the material welfare of the working classes, though their good intentions had been frustrated by their fatal regard for the Rights of Property. On every other question Mr. Chamberlain and Lord Salisbury were at direct issue. Mr. Chamberlain, for instance, had attacked the Egyptian policy of Lord Salisbury, and remarked that as Prime Minister he had carried out a financial agreement which in Opposition he described as muddled and inadequate. Lord Salisbury scornfully retorted that it was an agreement to which England had set her hand, and she

could not tear it up because there had been a change of Government. "I do not like to say," he went on, "what name would be applied to such a proceeding in private life." No term of contempt would be too strong for a man who backed out of a bargain because he had changed his agent. As for the doctrines of Ransom and Restitution, Lord Salisbury said that they were the unique possession of this country—they would not be tolerated in any other civilised land! They were not even new—they were the common property of every barbarous and uncivilised Government!

It had always been understood—and Mr. Chamberlain had never denied—that he was in general sympathy with the demand for Home Rule. His intimate personal relations with some of the Nationalists in Parliament were somewhat impaired when he took an active part in strengthening the Rules of the House of Commons, so as to control the Obstruction which they had reduced to a system. On that point, and probably on that alone, he was strongly against them, but they were grateful to him for his long fight in the Cabinet against Coercion, for the part he had taken in obtaining the release of Mr. Parnell, and for his advocacy of such measures as the Compensation for Disturbance and the Arrears Bills. Speaking at Swansea on 1st February 1883—when Lord Spencer and Mr. Trevelyan had been sent out specially to uphold Law and Order—he expressed, as in duty bound, his confidence in their firmness, discretion, and impartiality. "But," he added, "we must not deceive ourselves." Our task in Ireland would never be completed until we had "enlisted, on the side of the English Government and People, the interest and influence of the bulk of the Irish nation." Read twenty years after they were spoken, the words are almost an empty platitude. In 1883 they amounted to a defiance of public opinion and an implied criticism of the "strong" policy recently adopted by Ministers.

The Obstruction in Parliament, from which he had



suffered as a Minister, was, he thought, an argument in favour of Home Rule. This point he brought out—a few days before the defeat of Mr. Gladstone's Government—in a speech delivered to the Cobden Club:—

“We have to deal with the system under which the greatest legislative assemblage in the world has begun to lose its usefulness, and in consequence lose its influence. And that result can never be accomplished so long as the Imperial Parliament is burdened with an ever-increasing amount of petty detail with which it is incompetent to deal, and which ought to be referred to other bodies. We have also to recognise and to satisfy the national sentiment, which is in itself a praiseworthy and a patriotic and an inspiring feeling, and which both in Scotland and Ireland has led to a demand for a local control of purely domestic affairs. And these objects can only be secured, I believe, by some great measure of Devolution, by which the Imperial Parliament shall maintain its supremacy, but shall nevertheless relegate to subordinate authorities the control and administration of their local business. I believe, gentlemen, that in this way only is there any chance of our being able to remove the deeply-rooted discontent which follows as a natural consequence from the attempt of one nation to control and interfere with the domestic and the social economy of another, whose genius it does not understand, whose pressing necessities it is not in a position to appreciate, whose business it has not time to attend to, and whose prejudices and whose preferences it is impossible, even with the very best intentions, to avoid sometimes ignoring or offending. I look forward with confidence to the opportunity which will be afforded in the new Parliament for the consideration of this momentous question, and I believe that in the successful accomplishment of its solution lies the only hope of the pacification of Ireland and of the maintenance of the strength and integrity of the Empire, which are in danger, which are gravely compromised, so long as an integral portion of Her Majesty's

dominions can only be governed by exceptional legislation, and so long as it in consequence continues to be discontented and estranged."

About a fortnight later he declared at Holloway that the existing system of administering Irish affairs could not be long continued:—

"The pacification of Ireland at this moment depends, I believe, on the concession to Ireland of the right to govern itself in the matter of its purely domestic business. What is the alternative? Are you content, after nearly eighty years of failure, to renew once more the dreary experience of repressive legislation? Is it not discreditable to us that even now it is only by unconstitutional means that we are able to secure peace and order in one portion of Her Majesty's dominions? I do not believe that the great majority of Englishmen have the slightest conception of the system under which this free nation attempts to rule the sister country. It is a system which is founded on the bayonets of 30,000 soldiers encamped permanently as in a hostile country. It is a system as completely centralised and bureaucratic as that with which Russia governs Poland, or as that which prevailed in Venice under the Austrian rule. An Irishman at this moment cannot move a step—he cannot lift a finger in any parochial, municipal, or educational work, without being confronted with, interfered with, controlled, by an English official, appointed by a foreign Government, and without a shade or shadow of representative authority.

"I say the time has come to reform altogether the absurd and irritating anachronism which is known as Dublin Castle. That is the work to which the new Parliament will be called, and I believe that by its successful accomplishment it will do more to secure the strength, the character, and the influence of the nation, than by the addition of any amount, however large, to the expenditure of the nation for Naval or Military purposes—that it will go further to maintain our weight in the Councils of

Europe than any amount of bluster in our relations with foreign countries, and that it will do more to promote the true interests of the People of the United Kingdom than any extension of the Empire, which it is our business to govern well and wisely before we seek to multiply our responsibilities, or enlarge our obligations."

What Mr. Chamberlain meant by Home Rule, and what was his attitude towards the progressive demands of Mr. Parnell, are questions for a separate Chapter. It is enough to mention here that Home Rule was part of his programme for the future, and that he had actually submitted to the Cabinet a scheme for the establishment of National Councils (not only in Ireland) which he withdrew in face of the opposition offered by the Moderate Liberals. It was quite understood that, in addition to the other items of the Unauthorised Programme, he intended, in any Government of which he might hereafter become a member, to press the claims of Ireland to some sort of National Self-Government—that he was, in effect, a Home Ruler, as Home Rule was then interpreted. The only other well-known English Members of Parliament who shared his opinion on this subject were Sir Charles Dilke, Mr. John Morley, and Sir Charles Russell (the late Lord Russell of Killowen). But though he had explained with sufficient clearness his views on the Irish question, he did not at this time bring them prominently to the front. The points which he regarded as essential were contained in the Unauthorised Programme, and if they were not conceded he announced that it would be his duty to stand aside from official Liberalism. His position was clearly stated in a speech at Bradford (1st October 1885):—

"Gentlemen, these are the proposals, simple, moderate, and practical, which I have recently been propounding in the country, and which have earned for me from Lord Iddesleigh the title of 'Jack Cade,' and from less scrupulous opponents unmeasured abuse and misrepresentation. Whether they will be included in the programme of the

Liberal Party or not does not depend upon me. It does not depend upon any individual Leader, however influential and highly-placed he may be. It rests with the Constituencies themselves and their representatives. As far as I have been able to understand public opinion both in England and Scotland, there is a great and growing determination that the Primary Schools shall be free to all, and that the hindrances which stand in the way of Education shall be swept away—Education, the chief and essential instrument to all moral and material progress.

“In those country districts with which I am best acquainted, there is also a strong desire that encouragement should be given through the Local Authorities for the creation once more of that class of small tenants and yeomen farmers which has contributed so much to the prosperity of other lands, and which in our own at one time formed the most contented and most prosperous part of the population.

“If I am right these views will find adequate expression, and they will receive due weight and attention from the Party Leaders. If I am disappointed then my course is clear. I cannot press the views of the minority against the conclusions of the majority of the Party; but it would be, on the other hand, dishonourable in me, and lowering the high tone which ought to prevail in public life, if I, having committed myself personally, as I have done, to the expediency of these proposals, were to take my place in any Government which excluded them from its programme. In that case it will be my duty to stand aside, and to lend a loyal support to those who are carrying out reforms with which I agree, although they are unable to go with me a little further. The sacrifice will not be one of very great merit, for I have not found official life so free from care that I should be unwilling to fall back once more into the ranks, and, in a humbler position, to lend what support I can to the common cause.”

The development which as a Radical he especially

dreaded, and which many speculative politicians regarded as not improbable, was the formation of a strong Centre Party. It was thought that the old-fashioned Liberals, under the guidance of Lord Hartington, might be induced to co-operate with the more progressive Conservatives led by Lord Randolph Churchill. Thus it was believed—not only by outsiders—that Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Chamberlain might be shelved on one side, and, on the other, that Lord Salisbury might be given his choice between being sent about his business and acting as warming-pan for Lord Randolph Churchill. A good many feelers had been thrown out in this direction, and various intrigues had been set on foot—not without some apparent prospect of success. It would have been a development not more distasteful to the official Conservative Leaders than to Mr. Chamberlain, and he did his best to avert it. Of the rank and file of the Conservatives he could believe anything evil:—

He said, “The old Tory Party with its historic traditions has disappeared. It has repudiated its name, and it has become Conservative. The Conservatives, in turn, unhappy and discontented, have been seeking for another designation, and sometimes they come before you as ‘Constitutionalists,’ and then they break out in a new place as ‘Liberal-Conservatives.’ Even this does not exhaust their kaleidoscopic changes, for many of them now, under the erratic guidance of Lord Randolph Churchill, are masquerading as Tory Democrats. What is the meaning and the object of all these numerous changes? I dare say you have heard of that immoral person who was brought up before the magistrate for having married seven wives, and who, when he was called upon for his defence, impudently said, ‘It is all right; I was only trying to get a good one.’ If the Tories are trying to get a good name they have been singularly unsuccessful. When a private individual assumes a number of aliases, it is not unfair to suppose that he is ashamed of his identity, and that his past life is open to suspicion. Of course it may be a sign

of repentance and of grace, and we ought to be willing to give him the benefit of the doubt. It may, but it may be only a prelude to further misdoing. Now, the Tories have many previous convictions recorded against them. What proof is there that recent adversity has had a chastening effect?"

The danger which for the moment seemed to threaten the Radical Party from this visionary Coalition induced Mr. Chamberlain to pay his first compliment to the Whigs.

"In a speech which was recently delivered at Sheffield, I observe" (he said) "that Lord Randolph Churchill devoted considerable ingenuity to pointing out the irreconcilable divergencies in the Liberal Party, and after an exhaustive criticism upon a recent speech of Lord Hartington's at Waterfoot, and after proving the incapacity and the ineptitude of the noble lord, Lord Randolph Churchill conveyed to him and to his friends a patronising invitation to leave the Party with which, by their history and their traditions, by their past services and their past sacrifices, the Whigs have been identified in order to join the Party of union, moderation, of consistency, and of patriotism, of which Lord Randolph Churchill is the most conspicuous member!"

That the manoeuvres of the Tory Democrats ended in signal discomfiture was partly due to the frigid decision with which their overtures were declined by Lord Hartington and his associates. So far as the Whigs could distinguish their political antipathies, it would probably be correct to say that if they had more fear of Mr. Chamberlain they had less faith in Lord Randolph Churchill. The Unauthorised Programme, even the Radical Programme, they could understand—they knew what they had to face and oppose. But what might be the next proposal of the Democratic Tories it was beyond the power of Political Man to divine.

## CHAPTER VIII<sup>1</sup>

### AS A HOME RULER

The Conservative Leaders, both before they came into office in June 1885, and for some little time afterwards, were charged by the Liberals with having arrived at a secret understanding with Mr. Parnell. The support which some of them had given—much to the disgust of many members of the Party—to the Nationalist demand for an inquiry into certain details of Lord Spencer's administration of Ireland lent colour to the imputation, and thoroughly earned the censure passed by Mr. Chamberlain in a speech delivered in Hackney on 24th July. He was, as we know, no apologist for Coercion, even when carried out by his own colleagues.

"I know," he said, "that Lord Spencer himself, as strongly as any man, desires to reform that system; but I say there is no difference of opinion among honourable and honest men as to the great qualities of Lord Spencer, and as to the self-sacrifice and courage with which he assumed his dangerous and thankless office, and as to the impartiality and ability, and the honesty with which he endeavoured to give effect to his mission. Well, until the last few days the Tories defended Lord Spencer and Lord Spencer's administration, and they defended it most strongly on those points upon which he was supposed to be at variance with his Radical colleagues. But now

<sup>1</sup> A considerable part of this and the following Chapter has been taken from *Joseph Chamberlain*, a volume by the same author, in the International Series, published in 1896 by Messrs. Bliss, Sands, & Foster.

all that is changed. In pursuance of the compact that they have made with the Parnellite Party—I won't call it a treaty, it is a surrender—in pursuance of this bargain, for which they were called upon to pay the price, their Leaders got up in the House of Commons the other day and separated themselves ostentatiously from Lord Spencer, from any approval of his administration, and they granted an inquiry which in itself implies a condemnation of his justice and fair play, and which brings into question the whole course of the administration of justice in Ireland. I say that by this one act the Tories have done more to lessen the authority of the Law in Ireland than all that the Radicals have said and done during the past five years—I may almost say than all that the Nationalist members themselves have said."

Later in the year, in the course of a general attack on "the men in possession," he returned to this particular charge:—

"They have been placed in their present situation by a combination which is still shrouded in impenetrable mystery. We have been solemnly assured that it is not the result of an alliance; it is not a compact; it is not a bargain which has secured for them the support of the Irish National Party in the House of Commons and in the country. No, Gentlemen, it is a fortuitous coincidence that, just on the eve of a Vote of Censure, the whole Tory Party became suddenly converted, from the policy of Repression and Coercion which up to that moment they had consistently advocated, to a policy of Conciliation which had previously only received the support of a few Radical members like your Chairman to-night.

"I am willing to accept the explanation, improbable as it appears at first sight, and I do so all the more willingly because their surrender to Mr. Parnell is not more remarkable than their submission to English Radicals on many points of Home and Foreign Policy."

Lord Randolph Churchill, the most influential member of the Cabinet in the House of Commons, had not dis-



guised his close relations with the Home Rulers. Rumours of the absurdly mysterious interview which—probably, at his instance—was held in London in July 1885, between Lord Carnarvon and Mr. Parnell, had gained currency long before the story was related, with characteristic inaccuracy, by the Irish Leader. Of course, it had come to the ears of Mr. Gladstone, and led him to believe that the other side were making a bid for the Nationalist vote. Lord Carnarvon's subsequent explanation was to the effect that his conversation with Mr. Parnell was entered on with a mere desire to learn the opinions of the Irishman best entitled to speak for the majority of his countrymen: that he had expressly guarded himself against being supposed even to entertain the idea of a Statutory Parliament in Dublin, whether with or without the power of protecting Irish industries against British competition; and that Mr. Parnell indulged in deliberate fabrication when he gave a contrary impression. Lord Carnarvon had, no doubt, made these formal stipulations, protesting that he spoke, as it were, "without prejudice." But it is known now that he and Lord Randolph Churchill led Mr. Parnell to believe that they would support a moderate form of Home Rule, and press it on their colleagues. Lord Carnarvon did indeed take up the task of persuasion, but Lord Salisbury declined to consider the suggestion. But, even after the failure of the self-imposed mission to Hatfield, Lord Carnarvon expressed in writing his confident hope that in a few months he would make a convert of Lord Salisbury.<sup>1</sup> The Liberal Leaders meantime—Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Chamberlain, in particular—were kept *au courant* with the various versions that it suited Mr. Parnell to give out. They did not believe that Lord Carnarvon had been acting only for himself, or only for himself and Lord Randolph; the "Churchill legend" was then in full strength, and anything which that brilliant genius took up for the moment was supposed to represent

<sup>1</sup> The utmost concession ever obtained from Lord Salisbury was an expression of willingness to inquire as to the extent of Home Rule possible.

the future policy of a docile Party; in short, it seemed that unless Mr. Gladstone and his colleagues made up their minds at once they would find the Irish vote anticipated. Needless to add, this idea was carefully fostered by the half-truths and semi-confidences which Mr. Parnell doled out in artfully prepared instalments.

They were confirmed in this suspicion by the first acts of the Conservative Government. Lord Spencer and Mr. Trevelyan had demanded the renewal of repressive powers if they were to remain responsible for Law and Order in Ireland. Mr. Gladstone's Cabinet had decided—according to the account given by the Prime Minister, “with the Queen's permission”—to abandon the Coercive Clauses of the Act, but to invest the Viceroy, by Statute, with powers to enforce, whenever and wherever necessary, the “Procedure Clauses” which “related to changes of *venue*, Special Juries, and Boycotting.” They proposed, in fact, to dispense with the name, and maintain the reality of Coercion. It was because they had come to this determination that the Irish Party voted against them on 8th June, and drove them from office.

In striking contrast with this policy, the new Irish Executive, Lord Carnarvon and Sir William Hart Dyke, proposed to dispense with exceptional legislation. Various excuses were put forward for the new departure. It was but an experiment, Lord Carnarvon explained, and if it proved a failure it would be replaced by a permanent measure of repression. Nor could it be urged on the other side that Coercion, though administered with unflinching courage and unswerving firmness by Lord Spencer and Mr. Trevelyan, had succeeded in its objects. Another argument—adapted for platform use—was that, having just “trusted the people of Ireland” in admitting them to the privileges of an extended franchise, it would be absurd for Parliament to impose new restrictions on their personal liberties. A more substantial apology was urged by Lord Salisbury, who pointed out that, at so advanced

a period of the Session as that at which the Conservatives had succeeded to office, and without a majority in the House of Commons, it was by no means certain—it was, indeed, improbable—that they would succeed in carrying an adequate scheme. This, no doubt, was one, and would have been by itself a sufficient, reason. The other, equally cogent, was that Lord Randolph and his group were for the time indispensable, and could not be retained on any other terms.

It may be replied, of course, that the Conservative Leaders ought not to have assumed responsibility without power, or undertaken the government of the United Kingdom when they could not do their duty by Ireland. But the rejoinder would be that everything else might justly be sacrificed to the object of getting rid of an Administration which had concluded with the victorious Boers of the Transvaal the humiliating Convention of Pretoria; had thrown away, by the Evacuation of Candahar, what many experts thought the most solid result of the Afghan War; had involved us in vague and increasing liabilities in Egypt, without any compensating opportunity of making it an integral part of the Empire; had wasted English treasure in the Soudan, sent Gordon on a hopeless mission, and left him to his fate until rescue was impossible; had affronted Austria, estranged Germany, established with France a standing occasion of animosity, and brought us—through the Penjdeh bungle—to the brink of a war with Russia over a quarrel in which it was at least doubtful whether we were even in the right. This is the way in which the case might naturally present itself to the eyes of the Conservative Party, and they would have been slow to forgive their Leaders if (for the sake of a comparatively unimportant question of Irish administration) they had neglected the long-awaited moment when Mr. Gladstone should be driven from power. A distinct pledge had, moreover, been given by Lord Salisbury, at the commencement of the Session, that, in

the event of the Liberal Government being defeated, he and his friends would be prepared to take office.

The growing suspicion of the Liberal Leaders, that the Conservatives were acting in collusion with the Nationalists, was increased by a speech which Lord Salisbury delivered at Newport on 7th October. There was not, in fact, a word or a phrase which could fairly be held to imply that the speaker favoured, or would even consider, any scheme of Home Rule. But it did contain an elaborate apology for the abandonment of Coercion, and the tone throughout was more conciliatory than he had recently used with regard to Irish questions. Nor is there any reason why his supporters should refuse to admit that he was anxious, at the now imminent General Election, not to have the Nationalist vote in the English Constituencies given solid to the other side. That his speech was likely to succeed in that respect was clear to the exasperated managers of the Liberal party. They were righteously shocked at such "trafficking with disorder and disloyalty." This of course. But the more practical question was, how should they defeat the Tory intrigue?

It was thought that in Mr. Chamberlain a middle term might be found between official Liberalism and Irish Nationalism. He was not, and never had been, what would now be called a Home Ruler—*i.e.*, a politician who demands as a *minimum* the establishment of a separate Parliament and a separate Executive for Ireland, whether subject or not subject to a control exercised by the Sovereign under the advice of his Ministers. In 1885 the term was more fluid, and covered every politician ready to support the institution of any system of National Self-Government with regard to purely Irish affairs. Mr. Chamberlain fell easily within this definition, and had given practical proof of his sympathy with this limited form of Home Rule.

In 1884, as we have seen, he had brought forward in the Cabinet a scheme which was very much more compre-

hensive than anything generally understood by the name of Local Government. It was, in fact, a proposal to sweep away Dublin Castle, and to vest all the powers exercised by its various Departments, with others retained by Departments in London, in a National Elective Council—a body which would be regulated by Irish opinion, and would possess every power short of independent legislation. Subsidiary to this representative Council was to be a network of local elective bodies, charged with the administration of their several districts. Mr. Chamberlain has declared that, at the time, he had reason to believe that these proposals would have found acceptance with the Leaders of the Nationalist Party. On this point, however, he has been subsequently contradicted by the persons to whom he referred. The truth, probably, is that such assurances had been given to him, but given without any intention of observing them. The Nationalist has yet to be born—in any country under the sun—who will confess that the time has come when he may rest and be thankful.

“No doubt,” Mr. Chamberlain admitted, “there would have remained the national sentiment in favour of the establishment of a separate Legislature, but if such Councils as I had suggested had been established and put in full working order, if the perpetual interference of foreign authorities had been abolished, I believe that the old sense of grievance would have gradually died out, and that a new generation would have arisen which would have been glad and willing to accept the obligation as well as the advantage which the union of the Three Kingdoms for Imperial interests is calculated to secure.”

It was not likely that such a scheme would be taken up by a Cabinet half composed of Moderate Liberals, and depending upon a declining majority in an expiring Parliament. The proposal was not adopted,<sup>1</sup> and nothing would ever have been heard of it had not Mr. Chamberlain him-

<sup>1</sup> A well-informed reviewer of this book, writing in the *Athenæum*, October 3, 1903, favours the view that the Cabinet was equally divided on this point and fell before a decision was reached.

self made the disclosure. It is possible also—and more than possible—that Mr. Parnell helped to wreck the plan. No sooner did he gather that something might be conceded than he raised his terms.

At a complimentary banquet, held in Dublin on 24th August, he had declared that the question of the legislative Independence of Ireland was on the point of solution. Speaking of the Dublin Parliament as established, he defined the powers which it would claim. They included a free hand with regard to the Land, the right of building up Irish industries (which meant Protection as against England), and control of public education (which might involve a sort of endowment of the Roman Catholic Religion). The Legislature would, Mr. Parnell hoped, consist of a single Chamber; he did not want a House of Lords.

To this extended and apparently unexpected demand, Mr. Chamberlain had replied in a speech at Warrington on 8th September: "Speaking for myself, I say that if these, and these alone, are the terms on which Mr. Parnell's support is to be obtained, I will not enter into competition for it. This new programme of Mr. Parnell's involves a great extension of anything that we have hitherto understood by 'Home Rule.' The powers he claims for his separate Parliament are altogether beyond anything which exists in the case of the State Legislatures of the American Union, which has hitherto been the type and model of the Irish demands; and if this claim were conceded, we might as well for ever abandon all hope of maintaining a United Kingdom. We should establish within less than thirty miles of our shores a new foreign country, animated from the outset with unfriendly intentions towards ourselves. A policy like that, I firmly believe, would be disastrous and ruinous to Ireland herself. It would be dangerous to the security of this country, and under these circumstances I hold that we are bound to take every step in our power to avert so great a calamity."

He could not admit that 5,000,000 Irishmen had any more right to govern themselves without regard to the rest of the United Kingdom than the 5,000,000 inhabitants of the Metropolis. "God had made us neighbours, and I would to Heaven our Rulers had made us friends. But as neighbours neither one nor the other has any right so to rule his own household as to be a source of annoyance or danger to the other. Subject to that limitation, I for my part would concede the greatest possible measure of Local Government to the Irish people, as I would concede it also to the English and the Scotch."

Mr. Chamberlain still believed, as he explained at Glasgow a few weeks later, that if his scheme of a National Council for Ireland—which might be applied, if necessary, to Scotland, Wales, and even to England—had been sanctioned by Parliament it would have been thankfully accepted by Mr. Parnell. "It is quite true," he added, "that Mr. Parnell asks now for a great deal more, and we know who has encouraged him. But it does not follow that he would not have taken a great deal less." The sudden unreasonableness of Mr. Parnell was due, Mr. Chamberlain suggested, to Conservative intrigue. No sooner did they get wind of a possible concession from the Liberals than they set themselves to outbid it. It was a neat rejoinder, though not very convincing.

Explicit as was the Warrington speech, it was not, and was not meant to be, a definite rejection of the whole Nationalist programme—still less, to lead to an open quarrel with the Irish Leader. Mr. Chamberlain congratulated him on having dwelt on "the folly, as well as the wickedness," of the cowardly crimes which had so greatly discredited the Irish cause. That fact the speaker regarded as one of "good augury," and he reaffirmed his readiness to give Ireland—as he would give England and Scotland—the "greatest possible measure of Local Government"—a phrase almost identical with that previously used by Mr. Gladstone, and approvingly quoted by Mr. Chamber-

... (3rd June) at Birmingham—"the widest possible Self-Government" consistent with maintaining the "integrity of the Empire."

Nevertheless, the difference between what Mr. Parnell would accept and what Mr. Gladstone or Mr. Chamberlain would grant<sup>1</sup> was so sharp and clear that there seemed no chance of an arrangement being made. On the eve of the General Election, the Liberal Leader asked, at Edinburgh, for such a majority as would maintain the independence of the House of Commons, as a whole, in dealing with the Irish Question. He expressed his fervent hope that "from one end of Great Britain to the other" not a single representative would be returned who, "for one moment, would listen to any proposition tending to impair the visible and sensible Empire." Mr. Parnell's reply (Liverpool, 10th November) was that English legislation should not be advanced until the Irish Question had been disposed of. He invited Mr. Gladstone to formulate his offer of Limited Self-Government by drawing up a Constitution for Ireland—subject to the conditions and limitations for which he had stipulated to safeguard the supremacy of the Crown and the integrity of the Empire.

Mr. Gladstone (17th November) noticed, but hardly answered, the challenge. Till Ireland had chosen her representatives there could not, he said, be any authoritative statement of her wishes, and without that knowledge any proposal would be made in the dark. Besides, he was not himself in an official position, and could not assume a function that properly belonged to Ministers. The meaning of all this was that Mr. Gladstone refused to be "drawn." The physician would not prescribe until

<sup>1</sup> On Oct. 7th 1885, Mr. Chamberlain visited Mr. Gladstone at Hawarden, and the general policy of a future Liberal Administration was frankly discussed. On Irish matters (Mr. Gladstone thought) they were pretty well agreed, except on the secondary point, "whether Parnell would be satisfied with a County Government Bill, good so far as it went, maintaining on other matters his present general attitude." Both were of opinion that "a prolongation of the present relations of the Irish Party would be a national disgrace," and the civilised world would "mock at the political genius of countries which could not so far contrive to understand one another as to bring their differences to an accommodation" (Morley's "Gladstone").



he had been called in. As no definite offer could be got from Mr. Gladstone, Mr. Parnell issued his Manifesto urging his countrymen in Great Britain to vote against the "man who coerced Ireland, deluged Egypt with blood, menaces religious liberty in the school, the freedom of speech in Parliament, and promises to the country generally a repetition of the crimes and follies of the last Liberal Administration."

The result of the General Election was just that which Mr. Gladstone had deprecated. The Conservatives (249) and the Home Rulers (86) amounted to 335—the exact strength of the Liberals. It would, no doubt, be easy enough to defeat the Conservative Ministry, but Mr. Gladstone could not maintain himself in power if the Parnellites were to remain hostile. The Irish were practically masters of the Imperial Parliament. On 12th December, a feeler had been thrown out by the *Daily News*. It was suggested that a small committee should be formed of the leaders of both Parties, including Mr. Parnell and some of his friends, which should consider what sort of legislature it would be wise and safe to set up in Dublin. It was at once evident that the Conservatives would not take part in such a Conference, and on 17th December the whole situation was suddenly changed. It was announced in *The Standard* that Mr. Gladstone was prepared to deal with the Home Rule Question on the following lines:—

The unity of the Empire, the authority of the Crown, and the supremacy of Imperial Parliament were to be maintained.

An Irish Parliament was to be created, and entrusted with administrative and legislative powers.

There was to be security for the representation of minorities and the partition of Imperial charges.

A certain number of Irish members were to be nominated by the Crown.

A prompt, though ambiguous, denial was telegraphed by Mr. Gladstone. The statement was not, he said, an accurate representation of his views, but was, he presumed, a speculation upon them. It had not been published with his knowledge or authority; nor was any other, beyond

his own public declarations. This very qualified repudiation made it clear that the statement was substantially correct, and everybody took it for granted that Mr. Gladstone had at last been converted to Home Rule.

That impression was confirmed by the statement made, the same evening, by Mr. Chamberlain, at the Birmingham Reform Club:—

“I have hoped—I have expressed publicly the desire—that the two Democracies, the English and the Irish, moved by common aspiration and sympathetic appreciation, should march shoulder to shoulder along the paths of political freedom and progress. Mr. Parnell, indeed, has alienated and embittered all sections of the Liberal Party; but national questions of grave importance must not be prejudiced by personal considerations. We are face to face with a very remarkable demonstration of the Irish people. They have shown that, so far as regards the great majority of them, they are earnestly in favour of a change in the administration of their Government, and of some system which would give them a larger control of their domestic affairs. Well, we ourselves, by our public declarations and by our Liberal principles, are pledged to acknowledge the substantial justice of the claim. I see in the papers some account of negotiations which are reported to have been proceeding between the leaders of the Liberal Party in England and Mr. Parnell. I have had no part in any negotiations. I have expressed no approval of any scheme, and I think it very likely that the rumours which affect other prominent members of the Liberal Party may be equally groundless.

“As to Mr. Gladstone,” he continued, “we know what his opinion is from his public utterances. He has again and again said that the first duty of Liberal statesmen is to maintain the integrity of the Empire and the supremacy of the Crown; but that, subject to that, he was prepared to give the largest possible measure of Local Government that could be conceived or proposed.

Well, I entirely agree with those principles, and I have so much faith in the experience and patriotism of Mr. Gladstone, that I cannot doubt that, if he should ever see his way to propose any scheme of arrangement, I shall be able conscientiously to give it my humble support. But it is right, it is due to the Irish people, to say that all sections of the Liberal Party, Radicals as much as Whigs, are determined that the integrity of the Empire shall be a reality, and not an empty phrase."

Mr. Chamberlain once again referred to the American example, when the Northern States poured out their blood and treasure like water to preserve the Union, and "fought and won the grandest contest of our time." If Englishmen retained the courage and stubborn determination of their race, they would allow nothing to impair the effective union of the Three Kingdoms that owed allegiance to the Sovereign. But the real point of the speech came at the end. Personally, he did not think the time had arrived when the Liberals could usefully interpose. "Mr. Parnell has appealed to the Tories. Let him settle accounts with his new friends. Let him test their sincerity and goodwill; and if he finds he has been deceived, he will approach the Liberal Party in a spirit of reason and conciliation."

The policy of Mr. Chamberlain, then, was, if possible, to throw on the Tories the odium of considering, if not conceding, Home Rule. It would draw their fangs if it could be shown that between their proposals and those of Mr. Gladstone there was not a distinction of principle, but only a difference in degree. Even Mr. John Morley—not an expert in the tactical side of public life, and a keen Home Ruler by sentiment and conviction—had his misgivings about its results as a practical policy. "It will stir deep passions," he said at Newcastle (21st December); "it will perhaps destroy a great Party." Clearly, it was an adventure which should either be left to Conservatives, or one in which they should be invited

to take part. It was in pursuance of this idea that Mr. Gladstone subsequently bethought him of certain informal discussions on the Irish question which he had held with Mr. Balfour when they were both on a visit to the Duke of Westminster, at Eaton Hall. The result was the amusing diplomatic correspondence<sup>1</sup> in which the astute Leader of the Opposition tried to entice the equally wary Prime Minister into an arrangement for settling the Home Rule question without reference to Party politics. There is no reason to suppose that in making this offer—politely but decisively rejected by Lord Salisbury—he was not acting in good faith. Of course, he was thinking first of his own Party, but the Conservatives also would profit if the Irish Question were cleared out of the way—especially if the House of Commons at the same time got rid of the Irish members!

There was, however, a consideration on the other side which Mr. Gladstone may have overlooked. So long as Mr. Parnell and his Obstructionists blocked the way, it would be impossible for Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Chamberlain, when next they came into office, to make much progress with a political programme that moderate men on both sides regarded with the most serious apprehensions. Against any comprehensive scheme of Radical legislation the Irish members were a more effective barrier than the House of Lords, since it was always easy to get up demonstrations against the Peers, and sometimes they would have to give way. Clearly, therefore, the Conservative Leaders—except those whom Lord Randolph had entangled in his negotiations with Mr. Parnell—had no object to serve in entertaining Mr. Gladstone's proposal, especially as they believed that a "strong and resolute Government" was best for Ireland.

Before the meeting of Parliament in 1886, it was realised that the experiment of dispensing with Coercion had resulted in disastrous failure. The resignation of Lord

<sup>1</sup> P. W. Clayden's *England under the Coalition*.

Carnarvon and Sir William Hart Dyke, who had, for the time, identified themselves as Lord-Lieutenant and Chief Secretary with that policy, was accepted. Though the former office was, for the time, left in commission, Mr. W. H. Smith was at once appointed to the latter, and, after a flying visit to Ireland, reported that the Executive must be armed with further powers. An intimation to that effect was inserted in the Queen's Speech, along with an unequivocal declaration against Home Rule. On 26th January the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced that, on the 28th, Mr. Smith would introduce, first, a Coercion Bill, for which precedence would be demanded, and then a Bill for extending the Ashbourne (or Land Purchase) Act of the previous Session. This meant, of course, that Lord Salisbury's Government would be thrown out by the joint vote of the Nationalists and Liberals as soon as a Resolution could be framed which would give the two Parties an excuse for combination. It was provided in an Amendment to the Address proposed by Mr. Jesse Collings, which embodied the policy of "Three Acres and a Cow." Ministers did their best to postpone the Division, which they knew would go against them, until they had expounded their Irish policy, and had some opportunity of forcing their opponents into an explanation of their Programme. But they failed to carry their point, and an animated Debate ensued, in the course of which Mr. Chamberlain attacked the Ministers. "We support," he said, "a hostile Amendment, in the first place, because the condition and claims of the agricultural labourers constitute one of the great questions raised at the last Election, and because it is our bounden duty to uphold those claims in Parliament; and in the second place, because we have no confidence that the Government will either do justice to the agricultural labourers or to any other question they may have to deal with."

Mr. Balfour had, indeed, announced that the Government were prepared to invest the Local Authorities, con-

sitated under their proposed Local Government Act, with the power of acquiring land for Allotments, but he expressed his doubt of the value of Small Holdings. Nor, again, did he make any suggestion—indeed, Sir Michael Hicks-Beach expressly disclaimed the idea—that their proposals would satisfy the demands of the extreme Land Reformers; the Radicals, therefore, felt that they might with a good conscience vote for Mr. Collings's Amendment to the Address, expressing the regret of the House that no measures had been announced for affording facilities to agricultural labourers and others in the rural districts to obtain Allotments and Small Holdings "on equitable terms as to rent and security of tenure." This was carried by 331 votes against 252, and the Government were defeated on a question of Confidence. In the adverse majority were included 74 Nationalists, while in the minority were 18 Liberals, among them being Lord Hartington, Mr. Goschen, Sir Henry James (Lord James of Hereford), Mr. Courtney, and Sir John Lubbock (Lord Avebury). Apart from any objection they might feel to the particular proposition before the House, these representatives of Moderate Liberalism refused to assist Mr. Gladstone in returning to power now that he was pledged to some form of Home Rule. They repudiated the principle, and felt no curiosity about the details. More uncertain was the attitude of about 70 other Liberals, of all shades of opinion, who had absented themselves from the Division.

The defeat of Lord Salisbury's Government was due to the initiative of the Radicals who had been acting under the direct influence of Mr. Chamberlain. On him, then, rests the responsibility—nor has he ever sought to repudiate it—of bringing the first Home Rule Administration into power. On 28th January, Lord Salisbury's resignation was accepted by the Queen, and on the following evening Mr. Gladstone received the expected summons to London.

Amongst his old colleagues who declined, or were not

invited, to associate themselves with a Home Rule policy, were Lord Hartington, Mr. Forster, Mr. Goschen, Sir Henry James, Mr. Courtney, Lord Selborne, Lord Derby, and Lord Northbrook. The new Cabinet was constituted as follows: Mr. Gladstone, First Lord of the Treasury and Lord Privy Seal; Lord Herschell, Lord Chancellor; Lord Spencer, Lord President; Sir William Harcourt, Chancellor of the Exchequer; Mr. Childers, Home Secretary; Lord Rosebery, Foreign Secretary; Lord Granville, Secretary for the Colonies; Mr. Campbell-Bannerman, Secretary for War; Lord Kimberley, Secretary for India; Mr. George Trevelyan, Secretary for Scotland; Lord Ripon, First Lord of the Admiralty; Mr. John Morley, Chief Secretary for Ireland; Mr. Mundella, President of the Board of Trade; and Mr. Chamberlain, President of the Local Government Board. Ministers outside the Cabinet were Lord Aberdeen, Viceroy of Ireland; Lord Wolverton, Postmaster-General; Sir Lyon Playfair, Vice-President of the Committee of Council on Education; Mr. Heneage, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. Mr. John Mellor became Judge Advocate General; Sir Charles Russell, Attorney General; and Sir Horace Davey, Solicitor General. The Under Secretaries were Mr. Broadhurst, Home Office; Mr. Bryce, Foreign Office; Mr. Osborne Morgan, Colonial Office; Sir Ughtred Kay-Shuttleworth, India Office; Lord Sandhurst, War Office; Mr. Acland, Board of Trade; and Mr. Jesse Collings, Local Government Board.

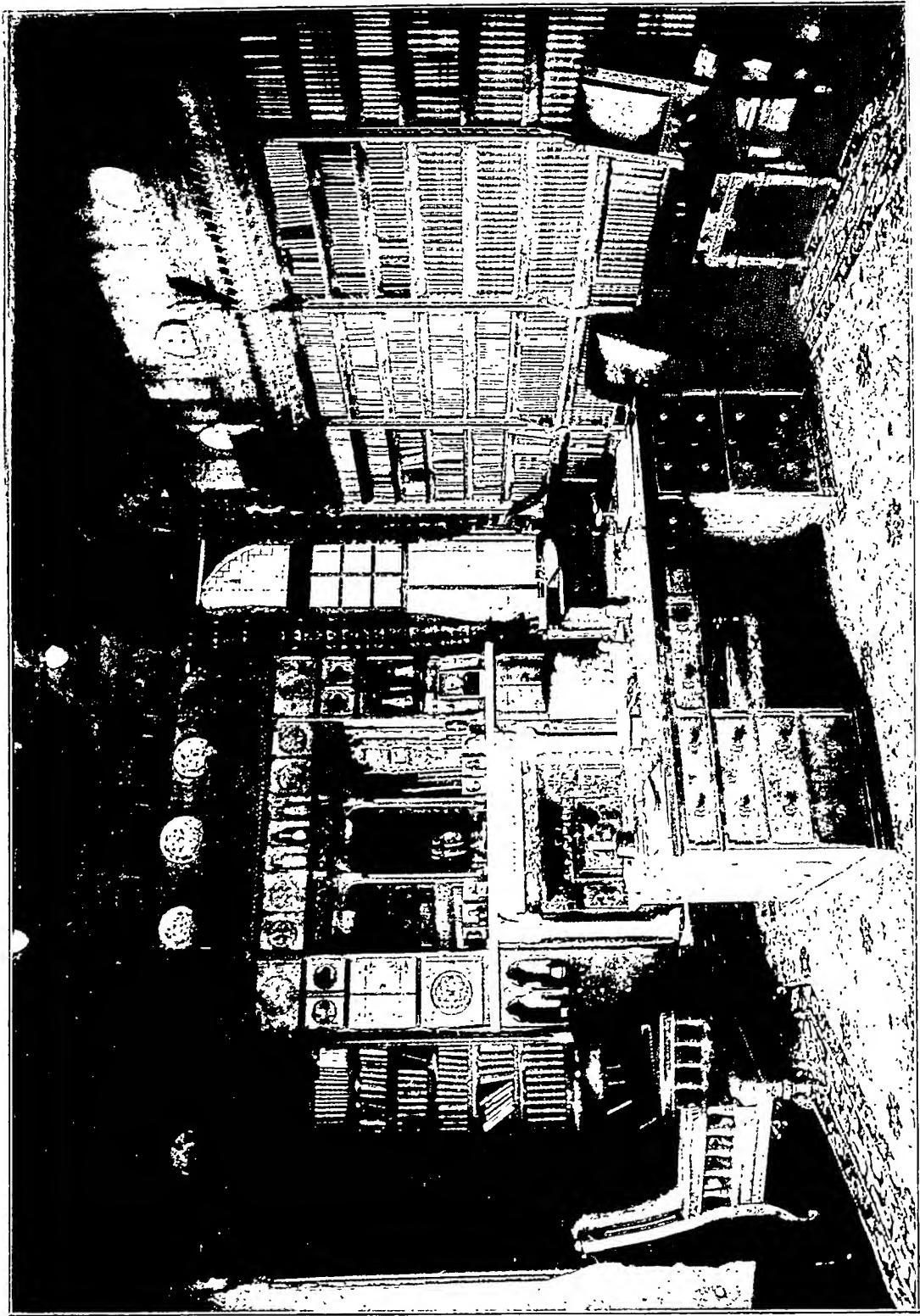
In this list it will be seen that no less than four names are included of Liberals who subsequently declared themselves Unionists—Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. Trevelyan in the Cabinet, and Mr. Jesse Collings and Mr. (now Lord) Heneage outside. The letter in which Mr. Chamberlain accepted office was subsequently read out in the House of Commons. but this is, perhaps, the best place to reproduce it:—





#### THE LIBRARY, Highbury

Mr. Chamberlain's library and study is a large square room in a corner of the building, with a finely-panelled ceiling, broad windows of tinted glass, and open oaken book-shelves with a good collection of works in history, biography, and modern literature. The furniture of the room is of solid oak. His secretary's apartments adjoin the library.



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THE LIBRARY, Highbury



"40 PRINCES GARDENS, S W.,  
"January 30th, 1886.

MY DEAR MR. GLADSTONE,—I have availed myself of the opportunity you have kindly afforded me to consider further our offer of a seat in your Government. I recognised the justice of your view that the question of Ireland is paramount to all others, and must first engage your attention. The statement of your intention to examine whether it is practicable to comply with the wishes of the majority of the Irish people as testified by the return of eighty-five representatives of the Nationalist Party, does not go beyond your previous public declarations, while the conditions which you attach to the possibility of such compliance seem to me adequate, and are also in accordance with your repeated public utterances. But I have already thought it due to you to say that, according to my present judgment, it will not be found possible to reconcile these conditions with the establishment of a National Legislative Body sitting in Dublin, and I have explained my own preference for an attempt to come to terms with the Irish members on a basis of a more limited scheme of Local Government, coupled with proposals for a settlement of the Land, and, perhaps, also of the Education question. You have been kind enough, after hearing these opinions, to repeat your request that I should join your Government, and you have explained that, in this case, I shall retain 'unlimited liberty of judgment and rejection' on any scheme that may ultimately be proposed, and that the full consideration of such minor proposals as I have referred to as an alternative to any larger arrangement will not be excluded by you. On the other hand, I have no difficulty in assuring you of my readiness to give an unprejudiced examination to any more extensive proposals that may be made, with an anxious desire that the results may be more favourable than I am at present able to anticipate. In the circumstances, and with the most earnest hope that I may be able in any way to assist you in your difficult work, I beg to accept the offer you have made to submit my name to her Majesty for a post in the new Government.—I am, my dear Mr. Gladstone, yours sincerely,

"J. CHAMBERLAIN."

This letter was, it must be admitted by those who take the least favourable view of Mr. Chamberlain's subsequent actions, a clear intimation that his acceptance of office in a Home Rule Administration was merely provisional. The charge that he had only joined the Government with a view of wrecking it, that he went on board to scuttle the ship, hardly required the indignant denial which he gave it

when he explained his subsequent resignation; and Mr. Gladstone, who on a personal question was never wanting in magnanimity towards his opponents, cheered the repudiation. There was, indeed, little hope, if Mr. Chamberlain really meant to stand out for the safeguards which he had postulated, that he would be able to concur in the scheme which Mr. Gladstone, with the assistance of Mr. John Morley, Sir Robert Hamilton, and, it has been said, of the late Lord Acton, was now preparing. It was known, in the first place, that the new Chief Secretary was chiefly bent on satisfying the aspirations of the Nationalist members, and desired, above everything else, to make the concession, not a grudging instalment, but a settlement in full.

The letter of provisional adherence was written on 30th January 1886, and it was not till 16th March that the first reasonably circumstantial rumour was circulated that Mr. Chamberlain would not accept the now matured scheme. In spite of the mystery that surrounds Ministerial deliberations, it is known that the majority of the Cabinet were not consulted by the Prime Minister, except when they were invited, from time to time, to approve the successive proposals adopted by Mr. Gladstone; that individual members were now and then asked their opinion on this or that point, but there was no attempt, hardly a pretence, to thresh out the scheme in full Council;<sup>1</sup> that, from the beginning, so marked an incompatibility had shown itself between the objects of Mr. Morley and Mr. Chamberlain, close personal friends as they still were, that Mr. Gladstone abandoned the hope of bringing them into accord; that he gave a deliberate preference to the adviser whose opinions more closely approached his own, and, after a time, paid little more than a polite attention to the arguments of the other.

Mr. Gladstone was, it must be confessed, in a difficult

<sup>1</sup> *Vide* Sir George Trevelyan's explanation in Parliament of his reasons for resigning office.

position. The faith of the Irish members was, at this time, pinned to Mr. Morley; and if he were to leave the Government it was certain they would repudiate the Bill. It was also known that he must retire rather than make himself responsible for an incomplete Measure. Home Rule was the chief reason for his being called within the Cabinet. Mr. Chamberlain, on the other hand, was identified with several causes all of which he was equally anxious to promote. There was, therefore, a chance—so it seemed to Mr. Gladstone—that at the last moment his President of the Local Government Board might be induced, by some colourable concessions, to sink his objections to this particular Measure, rather than break with the Party to which he looked for the future accomplishment of an extensive Programme. It must also be borne in mind that Mr. Gladstone was honestly convinced that the Bill was the best that could be framed—as, perhaps, it was—and that, on further consideration, so acute and reasonable a Statesman as Mr. Chamberlain would be compelled to acknowledge its merits.

It is not easy to say—perhaps Mr. Chamberlain himself would not assert with absolute confidence—whether there ever was any ground for such expectations; whether any further safeguards, such as Mr. Gladstone might have been persuaded to incorporate in the Bill, or any limitations devised for controlling the proposed Irish Legislature, might have constituted the basis of a working compromise. We should say No if we judged simply by the speech that Mr. Chamberlain made at the First Reading Debate, so essential seem the points of difference between what he would accept and what Ministers proposed. But it must be remembered that he stated, on this occasion, that he had resigned, not only on the Home Rule Bill, but also on the Land Purchase Bill; and, though he was checked by the Prime Minister when he touched on a Measure not yet presented to Parliament, he subsequently found an opportunity of stating his objections to the double scheme. The

letter in which Mr. Chamberlain's decision to leave the Government was given—a decision which he had been invited to reconsider but would not change—was dated 15th March:—

“MY DEAR MR. GLADSTONE,—I have carefully considered the results of the discussion on Saturday, and I have come, with the deepest reluctance, to the conclusion that I shall not be justified in attending the meeting of the Cabinet on Tuesday, and that I must ask you to lay my resignation before the Queen. You will remember that, in accepting office, I expressed grave doubts as to the probability of my being able to support your Irish policy. Up to that time, however, no definite proposals had been formulated by you, and it was only on Saturday last that you were able to make a communication to the Cabinet on the subject. Without entering on unnecessary details, I may say that you proposed a scheme of Irish land-purchase which involved an enormous and unprecedented use of British credit, ‘in order,’ in your own words, ‘to afford to the Irish landlord refuge and defence from a possible mode of government in Ireland which he regards as fatal to him.’ This scheme, which contemplates only a trifling reduction of the judicial rents fixed before the recent fall in prices, would commit the British taxpayer to tremendous obligations, accompanied, in my opinion, with serious risk of ultimate loss. The greater part of the land of Ireland would be handed over to a new Irish elective authority, who would thus be at once the landlords and the delegates of the Irish tenants. I fear that these capacities would be found inconsistent; and that the tenants, unable or unwilling to pay the rents demanded, would speedily elect an authority pledged to give them relief, and to seek to recoup itself by an early repudiation of what would be described as the English tribute. With these anticipations, I was naturally anxious to know what was the object for which this risk was to be incurred, and for what form of Irish government it was intended to pave the way. I gathered from your statements that, although your plans are not finally matured, yet you have come to the conclusion that any extension of Local Government on exclusive lines, including even the creation of a National Council or Councils, for purely Irish business, would now be entirely inadequate, and that you are convinced of the necessity for conceding a separate Legislative Assembly for Ireland, with full powers to deal with all Irish affairs. I understood, that you would exclude from their competence the control of the Army and Navy, and the direction of Foreign and Colonial policy; but that you would allow them to arrange their own Customs tariff, to have entire control of the Civil Forces of the country, and even, if they thought fit, to establish a Volunteer Army. It appears to me that a proposal of this kind must be regarded as tantamount

to a proposal for Separation. I think it is even worse, because it would set up an unstable and temporary form of government, which would be a source of perpetual irritation and agitation until the full demands of the Nationalist Party were conceded. The Irish Parliament would be called upon to pay three or four millions a year as its contribution to the National Debt and the Army and Navy, and it would be required in addition to pay nearly five millions a year for interest and sinking fund on the cost of Irish land. These charges would be felt to be so heavy a burden on a poor country that persistent controversy would arise thereupon, and the due fulfilment of their obligations by the new Irish authority could only be enforced by a military intervention, which would be undertaken with every disadvantage, and after all the resources of the country and the civil executive power had been surrendered to the Irish national Government. I conclude, therefore, that the policy which you propose to recommend to Parliament and the country practically amounts to a proposal that Great Britain should burden itself with an enormous addition to the National Debt, and probably also to an immediate increase of taxation, not in order to secure the closer and more effective union of the Three Kingdoms, but, on the contrary, to purchase the repeal of the Union and the practical Separation of Ireland from England and Scotland. My public utterances and my conscientious convictions are absolutely opposed to such a policy, and I feel that the differences which have now been disclosed are so vital that I can no longer entertain the hope of being of service in the Government. I must, therefore, respectfully request you to take the necessary steps for relieving me of the office I have the honour to hold.—I am, yours very truly,

“J. CHAMBERLAIN.”

The date originally fixed for the introduction of the Home Rule Bill was 22nd March; then it was shifted to 1st April; and, finally, to 8th April. Up to the last moment negotiations had been kept open, and it was stated that Mr. Chamberlain had submitted a counter-scheme for the establishment of a National Assembly in Dublin—free to make Bye-laws, but always subject to the Imperial Parliament; allowed to levy Rates but not Taxes; with power to manage Irish affairs, only limited by control from Westminster. Mr. Gladstone, however, had gone too far to recede to such lengths as were required, and, after the letter printed above, no serious hope remained



of changing the position either of the Prime Minister or his seceding colleague.

But at this time Mr. Chamberlain had no thought of entering on active opposition to the Government. He was not one of the Liberals who attended the famous meeting, on 14th April, at the Opera House, organised by the Loyal and Patriotic Union. Lord Hartington was there, and Mr. Goschen, and they made common cause with Lord Salisbury and Mr. Smith. When the Land Bill was introduced, two days later, and Mr. Chamberlain led the attack on that Measure, he admitted that since he had been a member of the Government great changes had been introduced into the Home Rule Bill. "In these changes," he said, "and in the prospect of still greater changes yet to come, I rejoice to see an approximation between the views of my right honourable friend and myself, which I did not dare to hope for at the time I left the Cabinet." His objections to the Land Bill (which had also been modified in the interval) still remained in force, because, though many objectionable features had been removed, the whole policy of the Bill seemed of doubtful expediency. It was unwise to grant to Irish peasants what would not be conceded to Scotch crofters or English labourers. But, hostile as Mr. Chamberlain's speech was to the actual proposal before Parliament, the general tone was one of conciliation. The conclusion was greeted with cordial cheering from the Gladstonians.

"For my own part," he said, "I recognise the spirit of conciliation with which the Government has tried to meet some of the objections which have already been taken to their scheme. I know I need not assure my right honourable friend, or my friends around me, that the differences which, unfortunately, for a time—I hope it may be only a short time—have separated me from my right honourable friend have not impaired my respect or regard for his character and abilities. I am not an

irreconcilable opponent. My right honourable friend has made very considerable modifications in his Bill. All I can say is, if that movement continues, as I hope it will, I shall be delighted to be relieved from an attitude which I only assumed with the greatest reluctance, and which I can only maintain with the deepest pain and regret."

That he was not using an empty form of words, Mr. Chamberlain proved by his subsequent action. He went down to his constituents in the Easter Recess, and delivered a searching, but not a violent, criticism of the two Bills now awaiting their fate in the House of Commons. His main purpose was, of course, to justify his action in the eyes of those who had so recently elected him as a supporter of Mr. Gladstone. The conclusion of his speech was very significant. To the Land Bill he could not assent. It was, he thought, a bad Bill.

"I would sooner," he said, "go out of politics altogether than give my vote to pledge the capital of the country, and the future earnings of every man and woman in the United Kingdom, in order to modify the opposition of a small class of Irish proprietors to a scheme which, if it remains in its present form, will, I believe, infallibly lead to the separation of Ireland from England. I object, in this case, to the risk which we are asked to incur. I object, also, to the object for which we are asked to incur that risk. But, as regards the Home Rule Bill—the Bill for the Better Government of Ireland—my opposition is only conditional. I regret very much that this great Measure, involving so vast a change, such enormous risks—so vitally affecting the welfare of the Kingdom—should have been brought before Parliament without more consultation with the other Leaders of the Liberal Party, and with the members of the Liberal Party generally. I think the Bill would have benefited a good deal by fuller consideration, both in the Cabinet and in the country. But at the same time I admit that, having been introduced by so eminent a man as the Prime Minister, the question can-

not be allowed to fall, the problem cannot be disregarded. The only question is as to the form which the Bill shall assume, and I think I can show you, in a few words, that, if certain alterations were made, all the anomalies which I have described to you, most of the objections which I have taken, would disappear. If, to begin with, the representation of Ireland at Westminster were maintained on its present footing, if Irishmen were allowed to vote and to speak on all subjects which were not specially referred to them at Dublin, then they would remain an integral part of this Imperial realm; they would have their share in its privileges, and their responsibility for its burdens. In that case the Imperial Parliament would be able to maintain its control over Imperial taxation in Ireland, and, for all Imperial purposes, the Parliament at Westminster would speak for a United Kingdom. I should like to see the case of Ulster met in some form or other. I would be glad if it were found possible to concede to Ulster—having regard to the great distinctions which I have pointed out of race, and religion, and politics—I would be glad if there could be conceded to Ulster a separate Assembly."

Mr. Chamberlain was, in fact, looking forward, as he had said, when the present time of trial should be over, to a future Liberal Reunion, without embittered memories or unkind reflections, so that the great work in which the Party had been unanimous might be resumed. The spirit he displayed, not less than the arguments he brought forward, obtained from his constituents a vote of unabated confidence, which was opposed by only two dissentients. Lord Hartington, it should be noticed, had been less successful. He was invited by the Liberal Council of the Rossendale Division of Lancashire to explain his conduct in voting against Mr. Jesse Collings's Amendment, as well as his attendance at the meeting held at Her Majesty's Theatre. After hearing his very able and temperate arguments, his constituents declined either to censure him or express approval of his course. They contented them-

selves with thanking him for his speech, and hoping that "such measures would be passed as would tend to the peace and prosperity of Great Britain and Ireland." The difference between the two cases was that Lord Hartington had identified himself with the Opposition, while Mr. Chamberlain had only separated himself from the Government.

There was still a belief that Mr. Chamberlain and his immediate followers might be induced to vote for the Second Reading of the Home Rule Bill, the Debate on which had been fixed to begin at so distant a date as 10th May, in order to give time for the Liberal Associations throughout the country to bring pressure to bear on hesitating representatives. A Manifesto was issued by Mr. Gladstone, on 3rd May, in which he practically intimated that the Land Bill was no longer to be an essential article of the Liberal faith, and that in the Home Rule Bill all questions of detail were subsidiary. The only important thing was to support the principle of establishing a Legislative Body in Dublin "empowered to make laws for Irish as distinguished from Imperial affairs."

The effect of this declaration was instantaneous. The obvious inference was that, to avert the threatened split in the Party, and obtain a nominal concurrence in his proposals, the Prime Minister was prepared to abandon his Measure for the Session, on condition that its principle should be accepted, and to bring forward something different on another occasion. At this moment Mr. Chamberlain was nearly converted, not indeed to Home Rule as outlined in the Bill, but to allowing the scheme to be peacefully withdrawn after the Second Reading. He believed that its successor, if any were brought forward, would be of a comparatively innocuous and conciliatory character. At this moment, however, an attack was made on his own stronghold, the National Liberal Federation. That powerful instrument of influencing opinion and organising action had hitherto been almost in his hands.

No little part of his reputation among the Liberals, and of the alarm with which he was regarded by the Conservatives, rested, we know, on his being the almost omnipotent "boss" of what was called the "Birmingham Caucus." Two days after the Prime Minister's astute Manifesto, Mr. Chamberlain's influence in that body was rashly, if successfully, attacked by the official Gladstonians at a special meeting (held in London), when Mr. J. E. Ellis moved, and carried by an overwhelming majority, a series of Resolutions promising unconditional support to the Government.

Mr. Chamberlain was menaced at the same moment with a raid on Birmingham, but there at least he was sure of his footing. To assault him on his own ground—as has been discovered by those who have tried to undermine his authority in the Midlands—is not the way to bring him round. Still, he was above all things anxious to avert a definite rupture in the Liberal Party. At this time, and for many months to come, his object was to keep close touch with the Liberals and Radicals throughout the country, and to induce them to realise the danger of the scheme which had been so suddenly sprung upon them. If a sudden disruption of existing ties had taken place, it seemed probable that Home Rule would have become an entirely Party question, the vast bulk of the Liberals going one way, and the Conservatives the other; and in this case, sooner or later, the Home Rulers would have had a majority, whereas, he believed that, so long as a considerable section of the Liberal Party could be prevented from accepting the scheme in its now crystallised form, there was no chance that it would pass into law. On 6th May he wrote a letter to Mr. T. H. Bolton, in which he said that "the key of the position" was to maintain the representation of Ireland in the Imperial Parliament, and her full responsibility for all Imperial affairs. This was not a detail that could be left to "the hazards of Committee." It was a point of "supreme importance," which

must be "decided on the threshold of discussion." But if this concession were made Mr. Chamberlain expressed a hope that the "present imminent danger of a fatal breach in the ranks of the Liberal Party might be happily averted." Though it is certain that this—the nearest approach that Mr. Chamberlain ever made to giving way—was not brought about by what had happened in the Caucus, it is equally clear that the deceptive success of Mr. John Ellis had stiffened the backs of Mr. Gladstone's advisers, who induced him to refuse a demand not more exigent than several others to which he was quite ready to agree. They were possessed by the notion that they might safely defy Mr. Chamberlain's influence in the country and in Parliament. They had previously reckoned his following in the House of Commons at more than fifty; now, they reduced their estimate to half-a-dozen.

The last overture made by Mr. Chamberlain having been ignored, on 12th May he convened a meeting of Liberals favourable to the "Home Rule principle," but opposed to anything like the present Bill. It was attended by fifty-two members of the House of Commons; and on the 14th an independent meeting was summoned by Lord Hartington. Of the sixty-four who assembled at Devonshire House, thirty-two, amongst whom was Mr. Chamberlain himself, had been present at the previous gathering. To the eighty-four members thus accounted for nine others had to be added, who had sent letters of sympathy; and the probability was that, eventually, the total of "Dissentient Liberals" would mount into three figures. But the important thing was that Mr. Chamberlain and Lord Hartington agreed, for the time, to act together, and vote against the Second Reading. This result had been finally brought about by the long-delayed response to the demand for the retention of the Irish members at Westminster. The night before, Mr. Campbell-Bannerman had been put up to say that the Government would give their most friendly consideration to any suggestion for "enabling

the Irish Members to take part in our discussions." But this foreshadowing of the famous "in-and-out" proposal did not meet Mr. Chamberlain's objections, and when Mr. Campbell-Bannerman had finished, he "put up his notes in his pocket," Mr. Clayden records, "with an air of disappointment and disgust, and glancing at Mr. Caine, shook his head and went away."

It has been suggested that at this time Mr. Chamberlain was playing to drive Mr. Gladstone into retirement, by defeating the Measure to which he had pledged himself, and to rally the bulk of the Liberals—who were by no means enamoured of Home Rule for its own sake—to the support of a Coalition Ministry of which Lord Hartington and himself would be the leading members. There is this much, but no more, ground for the imputation, that the possibility of a Liberal-Unionist Ministry was openly discussed in the newspapers; and as members of that imaginary Cabinet were mentioned, in addition to Lord Hartington and Mr. Chamberlain, Mr. Goschen, Sir Henry James, Mr. Trevelyan, Mr. Courtney, Lord Selborne, the Duke of Argyll, Lord Northbrook, Lord Carlingford, and Lord Derby. Undeniably it would have been, so far as ability goes, a strong Administration; but the project, so far as it had assumed definite shape, had to be abandoned after Lord Salisbury's speech on 15th May. He distinctly reminded the Conservatives that theirs would be the greater part of the votes to which the victory in the coming Division would be due, and plainly intimated that the responsibility of assuming office would belong to themselves, not to the allies whose help they received with a hearty welcome, and whom, in turn, they were willing to assist so far as agreement might be possible.

Even without this unmistakable hint, both Lord Hartington and Mr. Chamberlain must have realised that it would hardly be pleasant for them, just at present, to work together in the same Administration. The memory

of their previous differences in the Cabinet, of their open controversies on the platform, was still too fresh. It did not prevent them from co-operating against a common danger. No doubt they could have struck out a *modus vivendi*; but there must always have remained a certain sense of insecurity in an alliance between the typical representative of Whig principles and the exponent of the Unauthorised Programme.

Besides, Lord Hartington was a declared Unionist; Mr. Chamberlain was still, in principle, a Home Ruler, and even on the last day of May stated the case, at a Liberal-Unionist Conference, in favour of abstaining from the Division. But he accepted and endorsed, without reserve, the general opinion of the meeting, and next day pledged himself to vote against the Bill. From the speech which he delivered that evening, in pursuance of this decision, it may be interesting to extract the passage in which he defended his own action:—

“I have been assailed with extraordinary bitterness because I have exercised an independent judgment in a matter which I believe to be vital to the interests of the country. I have been told that I am animated by personal spite and private spleen. Yes; I do not complain of hon. members from Ireland taking that view and expressing it—it is their habit of controversy. No one has ever been opposed to them in politics but he has been covered with virulent abuse and misrepresentation, and none more conspicuously than Lord Spencer and the Prime Minister, whom they are now loading with fulsome adulation. But I address myself to my hon. friends round me, from whom I have the misfortune to differ. I ask them to consider whether it is really necessary to impute the basest motives to public men at a time when there are, on the surface, reasons perfectly honourable which may sufficiently account for their conduct. Do you say—do you dare to say—that my right hon. friend and colleague in the representation of Birmingham is animated by personal spleen



and spite? He takes the same course as I do; he is going into the lobby against this Bill and against the friend, the associate, and the Leader, whom he has followed with loyal devotion for many years of his life. My right hon. friend has done as great services, he has lived almost as long in public life, as the Prime Minister himself, and no one has doubted his honour.

“But you say that I am in a different position. And why do you say that? What I am saying now I expressed in public—it is in print—before the General Election, before I was a member of the Government, before I had the slightest conception that any idea of this kind was fermenting then—if it were fermenting—in the mind of the Prime Minister. I spoke at Warrington in September 1885, and, referring to the demands of the hon. member for Cork, I said then that if there were any party or any man who was willing to yield to those demands in order to purchase his support, I would have no part in the competition. And then many of my friends whom I see around me thanked me in public for what they thought that frank, plain, and courageous declaration. And now, forsooth! for having made the same declaration some three months later, when the occasion has arisen, they accuse me of personal and unworthy motives. Sir, the charge is unjust: the charge is ridiculous. For there is not a man here who does not know that every personal and political interest would lead me to cast in my lot with the Prime Minister. Why, sir, not a day passes in which I do not receive dozens or scores of letters urging me, for my own sake, to vote for the Bill, and dish the Whigs! Well, sir, the temptation is no doubt a great one, but, after all, I am not base enough to serve my personal ambition by betraying my country; and I am convinced, when the heat of this discussion is passed, Liberals will not judge harshly those who have pursued what they honestly believe to be the path of duty, even though it may lead to the disruption of Party ties, and

to the loss of the influence and power which it is the ambition of every man to seek among his political friends and associates."

It was evident that none of the Liberals who now formally separated themselves from Mr. Gladstone stood to lose so much by that step as Mr. Chamberlain: not Mr. Bright, whose resignation in 1882 had practically put him outside the pale of candidates for office; not Lord Hartington, or Lord Selborne, or Mr. Goschen, whose distrust of the new elements in Liberalism had been growing every year more pronounced, quite apart from Home Rule; not even Sir Henry James, who refused the highest prize of his profession, and showed that, even to an ambitious lawyer, there are higher objects than the Wool-sack. But Mr. Chamberlain gave up—when a little paltering with his conscience, a slight stretching of his convictions, would have enabled him to retain—not only his position as a member of the Cabinet, but also a reasonably assured reversion of the Liberal Leadership. He turned away from this brilliant and alluring prospect at a time when he was at equally open discord with Conservatives and Moderate Liberals, and there was little probability of his being admitted into partnership with the adversaries of his late allies.

The long-deferred Division, after a Debate spread out over a month, was taken on 7th June, and Mr. Gladstone was defeated by 30 votes—343 against 313, 94 Liberals having gone into the Opposition Lobby. The Prime Minister at once realised that he must either abandon Home Rule for the remaining Parliamentary term, or appeal to the country. It is certain that he entered on the General Election of 1886 in a very sanguine spirit. Undoubtedly, he had come to believe with all his heart in the cause which he had somewhat reluctantly taken up, and he was advised by Mr. Schnadhorst (the Caucus secretary), who was admitted to a special meeting of the Cabinet, that the Irish vote in the English Constituencies

would be enough to outweigh Liberal-Unionist influence. If it had not been for the ill-starred confidence with which Mr. Gladstone was inspired by Mr. Morley's enthusiasm and Mr. Schnadhorst's calculations, he might, perhaps, even at the last moment, have patched up a sort of peace in the Liberal Party.

## CHAPTER IX

### AS A UNIONIST

From the Election Address which Mr. Chamberlain issued to his supporters in Birmingham, it will be seen that, even after having so largely contributed to Mr. Gladstone's defeat, he still regarded himself as a Home Ruler, though opposed to a separate Irish Parliament. His co-operation with Whigs and Conservatives was, in his own mind, limited to resisting a particular scheme which they disliked in common. "Liberal Unionists," he said, "while determined in their opposition to a separate Parliament for Ireland, are, nevertheless, anxious to meet, as far as possible, the legitimate aspirations of the Irish people, shared, as they believe them to be, by Scotland and by Wales, for greater independence in the management of their local affairs." There were four points to be observed. First, the relief of the Imperial Parliament by the devolution of Irish local business; second, the full representation of Irish opinion on matters of local Irish concern; third, to give Irishmen a fair field for legitimate local ambition and patriotism; fourth, by removing all unnecessary interference with Irish government on the part of Great Britain, to diminish the causes of irritation and the opportunity of collision. It would be necessary to establish a complete system of Local Government for the Three Kingdoms; but, beyond and above a purely Municipal arrangement of this kind, a larger arrangement would be found safe and desirable, under which, subject to the concurrent and supreme

authority of the Imperial Parliament, the various portions of the United Kingdom should be enabled to exercise greater influence over local administration and over legislation for their special needs and requirements. The Address concluded with a spirited protest against the attempts made to excommunicate all who were unable to repudiate in a few months the opinions and convictions of a lifetime.

Mr. Chamberlain believed, not only that such a scheme might be acceptable in Great Britain, but also that, though not accepted by the Nationalist politicians, a full settlement on the above lines would put an end to the general agitation in Ireland. He declined, therefore, to join either in a common propaganda, or in a temporary fighting organisation, either with the Whig or Conservative Unionists. The improvised National Radical Union supplied all the machinery required by Mr. Chamberlain and his immediate followers; and in the Birmingham district, from which his most active colleagues were drawn, the question hardly arose whether the Conservative vote should be solicited or accepted. Mr. Chamberlain himself, Mr. Bright, Mr. George Dixon, Mr. Powell Williams, and Mr. W. Kenrick were returned unopposed; and in Bordesley, where Mr. Jesse Collings had to fight for his seat, the majority was in the proportion of four to one. But the Liberals whose views were more nearly represented by Lord Hartington or Mr. Goschen assisted, and were assisted by, the Conservatives all over the country. There was practically no conflict, hardly any competition, between the two Parties in the Unionist combination. The result of the General Election was that the English Gladstonians (194), with the Nationalists (85), were in a minority of 37 as compared with the Conservatives (316), without counting on either side the 75 Dissident Liberals who followed either Lord Hartington or Mr. Chamberlain. The latter, therefore, if they acted all together, were in a position either to give the Conservatives a commanding

majority, or to turn them out of office at a moment's notice.

On receiving the Queen's commands to form a Ministry, Lord Salisbury's first care was to bind the Liberal Unionists to a firm alliance with the Conservatives. He carried this policy so far that, with her Majesty's permission, he offered to stand aside for Lord Hartington, and even to serve in the same Ministry. There were several reasons why Lord Hartington could not accept the offer; one was that the Conservatives, who would constitute so large a portion of the proposed Coalition, evidently would not relish the command being given to a Liberal Unionist; another was that if the Whig Unionists were represented in the Cabinet the Radical Unionists would not consent to be left out. Differing as they did on many points, Lord Hartington and Mr. Chamberlain were agreed in the wish to use a Conservative majority to promote Liberal measures, and both believed that for the present they would exercise more influence outside the Ministry than if they gave a sort of security for allegiance by taking office with Lord Salisbury. Their own divergencies of opinion did not matter so long as they each occupied the position of an independent adviser to the Ministry. But if they were included in the same Cabinet they would have been forced either to sink or settle their by no means unimportant differences.

It was right that the offer should be made by Lord Salisbury, and equally right that it should be declined. Only a few months had passed since Lord Salisbury and Lord Hartington, Lord Salisbury and Mr. Chamberlain, Lord Hartington and Mr. Chamberlain, had been engaged in holding each other up to the scorn or ridicule of excited Party meetings. The betrayal of Gordon, the doctrine of Ransom, the Unauthorised Programme — these are ancient matters now; but in 1886 they were fresh in the minds of men who had been exchanging charge and counter-charge, sneers and epigrams. With the best

wish in the world to let bygones be bygones, some of the barbs were still rankling; the old rivalries would soon have broken out again. The wiser thing was for each Party to make trial of the other, and afterwards, if possible—when they should have settled down 'to harness' together—to convert their alliance into a Coalition.

The different attitudes assumed by Lord Hartington and Mr. Chamberlain were defined at a meeting held at Devonshire House on the day of the meeting of the new Parliament (5th August). A formal hope was expressed by the former that the Liberal Party would again be united, but that could only be done if Home Rule were thrown over—a course which he seemed to regard as within the range of probability. Meantime, Liberal Unionists must support Lord Salisbury's Government; otherwise, they would defeat the very object for which they had fought at the General Election. Mr. Chamberlain concurred with Lord Hartington as to the immediate duty of Liberal Unionists, but dwelt with considerable emphasis on the prospects of a Liberal reconciliation. He thought a basis of agreement might be found with regard to the Irish Question. As a sign that the Liberal Unionists did not consider that they had ceased to be Liberals, they should sit on the Opposition benches, alongside the Gladstonians. There was not precisely a contrast between the two speeches, but a certain difference in tone showed that one of the Dissident Leaders was beyond negotiation, while the other was still open to compromise.

But in the Debate on the Address, whatever might be his feelings towards Mr. Gladstone, Mr. Chamberlain now found himself at open issue with Mr. Parnell—who had moved an Amendment which was practically a vote of Censure on Ministers—and was charged by Mr. Sexton with having proved more Tory than the Tories. The extravagant abuse with which he was henceforth assailed by the Nationalists was very useful to Mr. Chamberlain.

It made him popular with just that class of his countrymen who loathed his general opinions. There must, it was felt, be something good in a man who was so heartily abused by the Irish members. The Nationalist cause was at this time at a considerable discount in England. Many of those who sympathised with the demand for Home Rule were estranged by the Plan of Campaign. Invented by Mr. Harrington, it had been taken up by Mr. Dillon and Mr. O'Brien—much to the disgust of Mr. Parnell and some of his more cautious Irish supporters. The undisguised dishonesty of the object, and the cruel methods by which it was pursued, had shocked not a few Gladstonians who had been able to extenuate or ignore the methods by which the Land League and the National League had maintained their illicit authority. It is believed that some of the English Home-Rulers in Parliament might have been found in a "coming-on disposition" if they had been approached at this time by the Liberal Unionists. But the bulk of that Party were not disposed to make such overtures. A meeting was held in Willis's Rooms, at which Lord Hartington insisted that the alliance with the Conservatives must still be kept up; and a somewhat chilly reception was given to the advice, telegraphed by Mr. Chamberlain from abroad, that a Conference should be proposed between the two sections of the Liberal Party with regard to concessions to Ireland.

Almost at the end of the year, the question of a formal Unionist Coalition was once again raised in a practical form. Lord Randolph Churchill had at last been taken at his word by Lord Salisbury, and his resignation was accepted. For us, who are wise after the event, it is easy to see that the Ministry were well rid of that disturbing genius. Lord Randolph hoped—what half the Conservatives in the House of Commons believed—that Lord Salisbury's Ministry were now on the point of breaking up, and that if they did not take him back on



his own terms they would not survive their second Session. In spite of his remarkable abilities, and his power of getting good work from his subordinates, he was not successful as a Departmental Minister; in the Cabinet he was intractable, but the general public, who judged him purely on his public performances, knew him only as the most effective platform speaker in England, and a singularly promising Leader of the House of Commons.

In order to abate a quite irrational scare, and restore the confidence of his demoralised followers, Lord Salisbury once again invited the co-operation of the Liberal Unionists, once again offered to serve under Lord Hartington, and once again was met with a refusal, though it was accompanied with something like a pledge of general support. The decision of Lord Hartington not to take office was warmly approved by Mr. Chamberlain, whose confidence in Lord Salisbury's Administration had been severely shaken by the retirement of a politician for whom he had a warm admiration; with whom, in spite of occasional quarrels, he kept up a cordial friendship, and whom he considered easily accessible to Progressive influences. But by obtaining the assistance of Mr. Goschen, who accepted the Chancellorship of the Exchequer, Lord Salisbury recruited a Statesman who was but nominally a Liberal Unionist—who was, in fact, more cautious in his policy than some who called themselves Tories. It was for his personal qualities, his political sincerity, and his financial reputation, that Mr. Goschen—the man whom Lord Randolph confessed he had forgotten—was so important an accession to the strength of Lord Salisbury's Government. But his acceptance of office, though it made a sort of personal tie between Conservative Ministers and Liberal Unionists like Sir Henry James, did nothing to increase the confidence of the advanced Reformers who followed Mr. Chamberlain, or even of those equally positive, though less impatient, Liberals who looked for guidance to Lord Hartington.

At the outset of Lord Salisbury's Second Administration, it is not unfair to say that the Radical and the Liberal Unionist Leaders made it their chief business to keep an eye on the Conservatives. They expected and insisted that, in return for the vote of their respective contingents in the House of Commons, they should be taken into consultation, and given as much voice in the settlement of policy as if they had been actually admitted into the Cabinet. After a time, both sides grew accustomed to a somewhat anomalous arrangement, and it worked with unexpected smoothness. But in passing judgment, whether favourable or depreciatory, on the conduct of the 1886-1892 Ministry, it is not right to say, "The Conservatives did this," or "The Conservatives refused to do that." Sometimes there was a concession by the minority, *e.g.*, when Lord Salisbury had his way about Tithes; sometimes—and this was, as a rule, on the more important matters—the yielding was done by the majority, as in the instance of Free Education. But, in a general way, the common policy was determined, not by surrender on either side, but by fair give-and-take.

Meantime—*i.e.*, before this understanding had been tested in practice—Mr. Chamberlain confessed, at Birmingham, that Lord Randolph's resignation had weakened his faith in the Government. That politician, he considered, had risen superior to the old Tory traditions, and, now that he was gone, Mr. Chamberlain feared a recourse to reactionary policy. It was this feeling which, in part, at least, made him throw out the strong hint that resulted in the Round Table Conference. The Liberals, he said, were agreed on ninety-nine parts of their programme; they disagreed only on one. Even on the Land Question they were not far apart.

"There is the real grievance of Ireland, there is the real problem we have to solve, and, believe me, gentlemen," he said, "without solving this Land Question, Home Rule is impossible; and I believe that, if you solve

it, Home Rule will be unnecessary. Are we," he asked, "far apart upon the principles which ought to guide a settlement of the Land Question? I think not. . . . I am convinced that, sitting round a table, and coming together in a spirit of compromise and conciliation, almost any three men—leaders of the Liberal Party—although they may hold opposite views upon another branch of the question, would yet be able to arrange some scheme."

Mr. (now Sir) H. H. Fowler declared that this offer provided the basis of a reasonable compromise; and on 3rd January 1887, a letter from Mr. Gladstone to Sir William Harcourt was published in the *Daily News*, in which it was practically accepted. Ten days later the Conference met at Sir William Harcourt's house—Sir William Harcourt and Mr. Morley for the Gladstonians, Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. Trevelyan for the Radical Unionists, and Lord Herschell to represent the Open Mind. There is no need to go into the history of those abortive negotiations. While they were in progress—and they proceeded smoothly at first—Mr. Chamberlain was as unreasonably eulogised by expectant Gladstonians as he was denounced without cause by perfervid Unionists. He had never pledged himself unconditionally to either side, and he was logically and morally quite at liberty to express—as he did—his eager hope that a reunion might be effected.

That he was mistaken is sufficiently clear. He had over-rated the importance of Lord Randolph's secession from the Ministry, and under-estimated the points of difference between the Home Rule and Unionist faiths, even when each had been rationalised down to the lowest working *minimum*. Already, some rash Gladstonians had begun to rejoice over his impending recantation, and he had to reply with some candid remarks about "political mischief-makers" who were trying to intimidate Liberal Unionists with "threats of political extinction."

"Let there be no mistake," he said; "we are anxious,



#### ROUND TABLE CONFERENCE, 1887

It is impossible to harmonize fully the various accounts of this famous conference. The story of it is given in sufficient detail on pp. 239-43 of Vol. I, and fuller information may be found in Harcourt's speech at Derby on February 27, 1889; Morley's speech at Wolverhampton on April 19, 1887; Trevelyan's letter in the *Times* of July 26, 1887; and Chamberlain's letter to Evelyn Ashley in the *Times* of July 29, 1887. The Whig or Hartington Unionists took no part in the conference. The Radical Unionists were represented by Mr. Chamberlain and Sir George Otto Trevelyan (born 1838), both members of the great 1880-85 ministry. The Gladstonian representatives were Sir William George Granville Venables Vernon-Harcourt (born 1827), John Morley (born 1838), and Farrer, first Baron Herschell (1837-99).

ROUND TABLE CONFERENCE, 1887



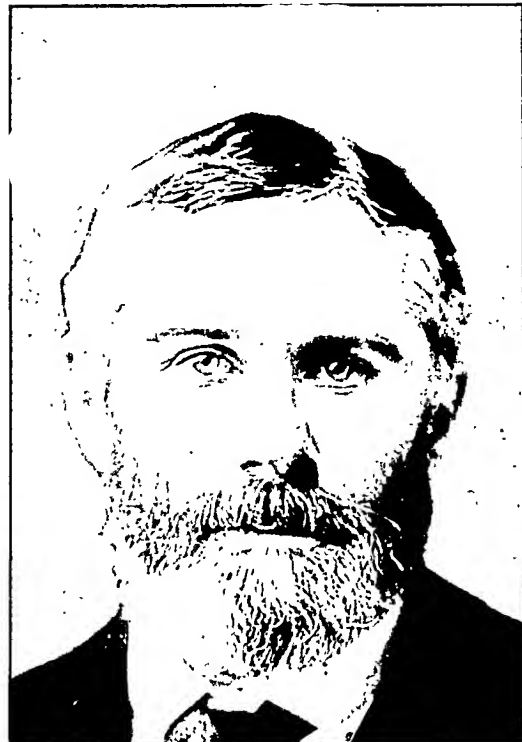
*Elliott & Fry*  
RT. HON. SIR WILLIAM HARCOURT



*Elliott & Fry*  
RT. HON. JOHN MORLEY



*Elliott & Fry*  
LORD HERSCHELL



*Stereoscopic*  
RT. HON. SIR G. O. TREVELYAN



we are eager, for reunion.<sup>1</sup> We are willing to go a long way to meet our former friends. We have laid ourselves open to much misconception by making the first advance, but there are limits to the concessions which can be made, which can be demanded of us, and unless there is an equal reasonableness on the part of our former friends, upon their shoulders must rest the responsibility of the further disaster and confusion which will fall upon the Liberal Party."

Lord Hartington and Sir Henry James were not deceived, as Mr. Chamberlain was—as he never would have been but for his sudden alarm for that Social Programme which has never ranked second in his mind to any other cause, except, perhaps, to that of maintaining the Union. This was, in fact, Mr. Chamberlain's last effort to rejoin the Party which he had hitherto considered the one better adapted, and more disposed, to carry Progressive legislation.

It is admitted on all hands now that the purpose of this Conference was, from the beginning, an amiable mistake. It would be impossible to reconcile Sir William Harcourt's account of the understanding on which the Conference met with that given by Mr. Chamberlain. Sir William's view is that the establishment of a Dublin Parliament with an Executive dependent on it had been taken as common ground, while Mr. Chamberlain contends that "not one word was said" about such a scheme. The plans discussed were very different; e.g., a proposal to establish some system of Provincial Authorities (on the model of the Provincial Constitution of Canada) subordinate to Imperial Parliament, and dealing only with subjects specially referred to them, the Imperial Parliament retaining a concurrent power of making laws and levying taxes. Sir William afterwards said that the negotiations broke down because Mr. Chamberlain was opposed, not to Home Rule, but to Mr. Gladstone; Mr. Chamberlain accounted for the collapse by saying that behind the Liberal Leaders

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Gladstone himself was very hopeful that Mr. Chamberlain would at last be brought over. "He is again a Liberal (*quand même*)," wrote Mr. Gladstone, and "will not on all points swear black is white for the sake of his views on Ireland"



was "a power they dared not face." Though the negotiations ended in an exchange of recriminations, they seem to have been commenced on both sides in perfectly good faith. But how was compromise possible when the delegates were pledged to contradictory opinions on such essential points as whether Imperial Parliament should be invested with an effective Veto on the legislation of an Irish Assembly? This power Mr. Chamberlain was bound, by all his past expressions and present convictions, to insist upon; and Mr. Morley was equally compelled, by his own genuine conversion to Home Rule, and by the demands of his Nationalist allies, to refuse.

On some other points that presented difficulty—such as the separate treatment of Ulster and the control of the Royal Irish Constabulary—a working arrangement might conceivably have been arrived at. But when a fundamental principle is involved, when both sides are sincere, and neither can be imposed upon by verbal shams, this kind of palaver is but waste both of time and temper. Of the former, not much was expended—a great deal of the latter. After two or three friendly meetings in January, an adjournment was made till the middle of February, at which date Sir George Trevelyan still believed that reunion might be attainable. The fact was that Sir George had been talked over, and Mr. Chamberlain had not.

A few days later, the *Baptist* published an article by Mr. Chamberlain, in which he showed that Home Rule was leading to the indefinite adjournment of "all Liberal reform," including the Welsh Nonconformists' demand for Disestablishment, a Measure with which he expressed the strongest sympathy. If the Welsh people, by returning twenty-three out of their thirty members to support Mr. Gladstone, meant to express approval of his Irish policy, they had "no right whatever to complain of the delay of their hopes, and they must wait patiently until the country has changed its mind, and is prepared to hand over the minority in Ireland to the tender mercies of Mr. Parnell

and the Irish League. Nor would they be the only disappointed persons. The crofters of Scotland and the agricultural labourers of England will keep them company. Thirty-two millions of people must go without much-needed legislation because three millions are disloyal, while nearly six hundred members of the Imperial Parliament will be reduced to forced inactivity because some eighty delegates, representing the policy and receiving the pay of the Chicago Convention, are determined to obstruct all business until their demands have been conceded." If any hope still remained of inducing Mr. Chamberlain to rejoin the official Liberals by offering him terms that he could conscientiously accept, it would have been dissipated by this utterance, which gave them a pretext for saying that he was impracticable.

Though friendly expressions were still used on both sides, and though there really was a temporary abatement of hostilities between the Home Rule and the Unionist Liberals, it was by Mr. Gladstone's directions that Sir William Harcourt wrote to Mr. Chamberlain and suggested that the Conference should be suspended for a time. The reason assigned was that the *Baptist* article had raised a storm which ought to be allowed to blow over. The facts were that the points of difference revealed were so radical that nothing could be accomplished by further discussion; and that Mr. Gladstone, knowing how sincere was Mr. Chamberlain's Radicalism, hoped that he would soon be tired of co-operating with Conservatives.

Mr. Chamberlain, naturally, accepted Sir William's letter as an informal discharge of the Conference; and told Sir George Trevelyan that he should not go on with it. There was no longer any hesitation about his attitude on Irish questions. He voted against Mr. Parnell's hostile Amendment to the Address at the opening of the 1887 Session, and against the Tenants' Relief Bill, and he supported Mr. Balfour's demand for "urgency" for the Crimes Bill. Though never converted to Coercion "as a

policy," and always regarding it as a "hateful incident," he realised that there could be no order or liberty in Ireland so long as the Plan of Campaign was allowed to continue; and he was particularly disgusted by the covert menaces which Mr. Parnell had ventured to throw out. Never, in recent times, has Party spirit in England worked more hotly, more savagely, than about Eastertide of 1887. The Nationalists realised that they would be beaten, unless they could intimidate the Government into dropping the repressive Measure which was being hurried forward by the Chief Secretary—which Mr. Gladstone, throwing himself heart and soul into the agitation, described as "the worst, the most insulting, the most causeless Coercion Bill ever submitted to Parliament." The sting of it was that it was not limited in duration, and that, being once armed with the powers they demanded, Ministers would not again be put to the trouble and odium of forcing a similar Bill through the House of Commons. On the other hand, the Coercion could be suspended—on the discretion of the Executive—in any district where it seemed no longer necessary; and before Mr. Balfour had ceased to be Chief Secretary he was to have the pleasure of announcing that it was dormant throughout Ireland, except in a few neighbourhoods still liable to agrarian disturbance. Granted that the need for exceptional measures had been established, it must be admitted that no more elastic or more effective scheme could have been proposed.

Mr. Chamberlain's views are defined with sufficient accuracy in the speeches which he delivered in Birmingham and Edinburgh; the one on 29th January 1887, before the introduction of the Crimes Bill; the other, on 15th April, after it had been passed. To his constituents he remarked, "that certain Radicals lately had been preaching a doctrine which was inconsistent with true Radical principles—*e.g.*, that it was a duty, as well as a right, to disobey a bad law. There were cases, no doubt, in which a man would be justified in offering passive resistance, taking all the con-

sequences and making all the sacrifices involved. For instance, if Church rates were reimposed, he would himself refuse to pay them: he would allow his goods to be taken into execution. But he would not barricade his house, would not throw hot water on the police, would not shoot the parson from behind a hedge, would not denounce the ministers of the law who were simply doing their duty, and would not hold them up to vengeance if he came into power. To justify a violent resistance to any law that one disapproves is destructive of all law. No law was ever passed which the law-breakers did not consider bad. Such a theory made every man judge in his own case—free to do what was right in his own eyes. No, a bad law should be amended, but while it was law it must be respected—as being the collective expression of society, the one security of the weak against the strong, the safeguard of the few against the many.”

“If (he said) you destroy the law, which is the highest expression of the Democratic idea of Equality, you will have to take your choice between Anarchy on the one hand and Despotism on the other, and to my mind it is a suicidal course for any Radical to lay sacrilegious hands on this great edifice of our freedom. What is the state of things in Ireland? In Ireland the law is violently resisted and openly abused. It is not the law of rent or the law of evictions which is in question. Those are the laws which may be, which I think ought to be, amended, in order that they may be made less stringent and more merciful, but it is the law against assassination, the law against intimidation, the law against theft which is habitually violated. For this violation there is no excuse. I am not prepared, even in this state of things, to support what can properly be described as coercive legislation—that is to say, such measures as the establishment of Martial Law or the suspension of *Habeas Corpus*, or any legislation generally restricting the liberty of the subject. But if it be necessary, in order that the law should be respected, to amend and

strengthen the ordinary law of the country, I am prepared to give fair and full consideration to any proposal which may be made to that effect. And I will fortify myself by a quotation from an authority that cannot be suspected of any tenderness to coercive measures or of any lack of sympathy with Ireland. 'Murder and outrage,' says this gentleman, 'are not to be allowed in Ireland, any more than they are to be allowed anywhere else. If there is a general attack on property all along the line it must be resisted. The question is how you are to suppress and punish murder and outrage, and how the Government is to deal with an organised attack on property. The answer is, by a vigorous execution of the law as it stands and by a regular and formal alteration of the law if it demands alteration.' That is a quotation from the writings of my friend Mr. John Morley—the late Chief Secretary of Ireland—and in the spirit of that quotation I am, as I always have been, prepared to act."

The speech at Edinburgh marked Mr. Chamberlain's assent, reluctant though it was, to the proposals of the Government:—

"In Ireland at the present time there are two Governments, two systems of criminal law and procedure, two codes of crime and punishment. You have on the one hand the Government of the Queen, which is the security for law and order and the protection of the lives and property of all classes of Her Majesty's subjects. You have on the other hand the government of the League, subsidised and guided by the money of the Convention of Chicago. You have on the one hand a law of the land, under which this country has developed its liberties and secured its great position as the first nation in the world. On the other hand, you have the unwritten law, which has never been publicly discussed, and which is so contrived as to lend itself to the objects of private vengeance and of rebellious faction. Lastly, you have on the one hand the official, the judicial tribunal of the United Kingdom, with

its system, which has been built up by generations of intelligent and patriotic men, and which is so contrived as to afford protection in all cases to the innocent; and on the other hand you have a secret tribunal executing their judgments by masked assassins, and meting out without appeal the punishment of fine and torture and death. You will either have to suppress and put down this illegal combination or this illegal combination will suppress your Government."

In spite of the efforts, described in the next Chapter, which Mr. Chamberlain, at the risk of irritating his Conservative allies, made for the relief of Irish tenants' grievances, he was at this time more disliked and reviled by the Nationalists than any other Unionist in Parliament. Nor was he sparing of taunts in reply. Peculiar exasperation was caused by his account, given at Inverness, of a "scene" in the House of Commons, in the course of which Colonel Saunderson accused the Irish members of being friendly with murderers—and, Mr. Chamberlain said, accused them truly. The point of that remark lay in the fact that the first "Parnell Letter" (about the Phoenix Park murders) had recently been published by *The Times*, and at this time both Parties seem to have lost their heads. Many Unionists, reasonable men in ordinary times, said and believed that most of the Irish members were little better than assassins, and the Parnellites retorted by charging their accusers with forgery and wilful slander. The violence of public feeling on both sides would have made it difficult, if any desire had still existed in Mr. Chamberlain's mind, to return to his old associates. The final breach, so he regarded it, was caused by a speech of his old friend, Mr. Morley. "How can we, in the midst of the heat of protest against this disastrous and shameful policy of Coercion," Mr. Morley asked, "hurry forward to reconcile ourselves with our Dissident friends, who are in the main responsible for fastening this policy on Ireland? How can we hurry forward to unite with Statesmen who not only

support the general policy of Coercion, but doggedly, defiantly, and steadfastly go into the Division Lobby against any modifications of it, and in favour of making the Bill as drastic as they can?"

This, Mr. Chamberlain replied, was "the turning-point." The cleavage, he said on 1st June, had become irreparable, and he was driven to the conclusion that on the Gladstonian side there was no longer any desire for reunion. It was in this speech that he used an expression which has been so often thrown in his teeth—as though it showed that his Unionist policy had been influenced by social ambition. But the context shows that the offending phrase, "English gentlemen," was only used by way of antithesis: "We shall be taunted, I suppose, with an alliance with the Tories. At least, our allies will be English gentlemen, and not the subsidised agents of a foreign conspiracy. I look beyond mere Party considerations. The Government may be Tory, but, if its measures are Liberal, I am prepared to discuss them on their merits, and without regard to past controversies."

On 14th June a meeting of Radical Unionists was held at Willis's Rooms, in which Mr. Chamberlain attempted to define their political position. They did not want, he said, to be absorbed in the Old Toryism, which was a dying creed; they did not intend to surrender to the New Radicalism, which was an English imitation of Nihilism, whose only dogma was opposition to all Government and all Authority. When they had secured their position they would be ready to ally themselves with any persons—whether they called, or had hitherto called, themselves Conservatives or Liberals or Radicals—who accepted the same principles as their own, and were prepared to carry out the same objects by Constitutional means.

As to Mr. Gladstone's latest offer to Lord Hartington, Mr. Chamberlain felt some delicacy in alluding to it. He was not himself included in the invitation. Indeed,

he was glad to be relieved from all responsibility for further negotiations. But he had perfect confidence in Lord Hartington, "in relation to that matter," both in his consistency and firmness. He was not likely to compromise Unionist principles. If Lord Hartington saw his way to any agreement, the Radical Unionists would have no difficulty in following him. Personally, however, he was no longer sanguine about reconciliation with the Gladstonian Party.

The position now occupied by Mr. Chamberlain was both anomalous and uncomfortable. He was at open issue with the Gladstonians, he was out of harmony with the Conservatives, and he was by no means at one with the Hartingtonian Unionists except on the single great question. Nor could he always reconcile himself to the various applications of the Crimes Act demanded by the Irish Executive. It had been decided to proclaim the National League; and Mr. Chamberlain, believing there was "no emergency in Ireland," not only abstained from supporting Ministers, when the question was brought up by Mr. Gladstone, but, with a few other Unionists, voted with the Opposition. It was in every way desirable, if the opportunity offered itself, that he should withdraw, for a time, from the personal controversies in which he had been so warmly engaged on one side, without having finally attached himself to the other.

It was at this juncture that a tiresome, old-standing dispute between Great Britain and the United States, with regard to the North American Fisheries, suggested to Lord Salisbury that the assistance of a Statesman who was also a man of business would be especially welcome. The Washington Government had agreed to the appointment of a new Commission, and Mr. Chamberlain was asked, and agreed, to represent Great Britain. Invested with this modern equivalent for the old *Libera Legatio*, it was hoped that he would be removed, in a complimentary fashion, from the embarrassments of his political



situation, and that, when he returned, it would be easier for him to drop into what now was coming to appear his more natural place as one of the Liberal Unionist Leaders, but in definite alliance with the Conservative Ministry.

Before starting on his important Mission, he naturally paid a visit to his constituents in Birmingham, where he delivered a vigorous speech in defence of the Government policy. This he followed up with a political tour in Ulster.

Though Mr. Chamberlain had never declared that the Ulstermen would be justified in taking up arms against a Nationalist Parliament in Dublin—a course which many of the Orangemen declared that they would follow—he had always, even in his Home Rule days, recognised the importance of their claims. He was prepared, it was well known, to remove Ulster from the jurisdiction of the Irish National Council which he had proposed in Mr. Gladstone's Cabinet. Now, as a Unionist, he regarded their objections to Home Rule as a fatal argument against it. In the House of Commons in June 1886, it was remembered that he had defended the Protestants of Ulster from the charge of being "unpatriotic and unsympathetic." Why were such epithets applied to them? "Because they are proud to belong to a greater country; because they take their share in the autonomy of the United Kingdom in which they have a part; because they cling to the traditions and the history of the United Kingdom, which is just as much their possession and heritage as it is ours; because they refuse to be cast adrift and cut away from the hopes and associations which they have hitherto cherished. I suppose if my right honourable friend had been a Frenchman he would have denounced the people of Alsace and Lorraine as unsympathetic and unpatriotic, when they refused to be reunited to Germany and when their hearts turned towards the great country from which they were forcibly separated. I suppose if he had been an Italian he would have denounced those members of

the Savoyard community who did their utmost to prevent the transfer of their country to France; and loyalty must indeed be at a discount when a passionate allegiance to the unity of the kingdom is made a moral offence and crime by a Minister of the Crown. . . . Now, is it a fact that the Ulster Protestants do fear for their material and their religious interests? There is no doubt whatever about it in the mind of any man who reads the papers or attends public meetings or knows anything at all about the state and condition of Protestant Ulster. But was I right to say they had some reason for it? Well, I belong to an extreme section of the Liberal Party, who have, all my political life, joined with those who would destroy every shred of religious ascendancy, by whatever sect it may be claimed. But then I think that gives me, and those who think with me, the right to protest against the substitution of one form of religious ascendancy for another, and I say that the Catholic Church, by its tenets and by its faith, is bound not to be content with equality, but to demand predominance."

The men of Ulster gave, of course, a warm welcome to so thorough-going and effective a champion. As a hard-headed race they were especially pleased with his statistical demonstration (Belfast, 11th October 1887) that Loyalists were not fairly represented in Parliament—only by 17 members against 86 who represented "Sedition." Even in Ulster the Loyalists had only gained 16 out of 33 seats. Yet at the General Election no more than 73,000 votes had been recorded for Parnellites, while 89,000 had been given to Unionists. Under a system which treated Ulster like the other three Provinces, it would have 38 members, of whom 21 would be Loyalists and only 17 would be Home Rulers. This argument, pointing as it did to a more equitable distribution of political power in the future, was even more gratifying to the Ulstermen than the general compliments which their visitor paid them. The Irish population, he said,

was divided into a majority of 3,000,000 or perhaps 3,500,000, who desired a great experiment, while the minority of 1,500,000 or 2,000,000, who resisted it, comprised all the cultivated intelligence of the country, the greatest part of its enterprise, and a large proportion of its wealth.

Again, at Coleraine, on 13th October, he declared in unequivocal terms against any form of Home Rule. It would only lead to Separation. It was no good for those who supported the former to say that they did not intend the latter. "I do not care a brass button," he said, "what the intentions of these gentlemen are. What I know is what will be the result of their policy; and whether they like it, or whether they mean it or not—as to which we may have grave doubts—I am perfectly certain that the creation of a practically independent Parliament in Dublin would be followed within a few months by the absolute independence of Ireland and the absolute severance of Ireland from Great Britain. That, therefore, is the issue that we have to discuss. We need not consider plans of Home Rule which are accepted as instalments by the Nationalist Party. We have to consider what would be the result, upon your interests and our interests, of absolute separation between the Three Kingdoms. Well, the first reflection which presents itself to our minds is that what Ireland most wants at the present time is capital to develop its resources. It wants capital to complete its communications, to enable the industrious farmers of Ireland to bring their produce to market under the most favourable circumstances. In Great Britain you have capital and to spare; millions and millions of money would be constantly seeking investment which frequently find very bad investments in foreign countries—whose interests English capital has done so much to promote. If Ireland were peaceable and settled, if there were a certainty of permanent order and security, this capital would be poured into Ireland, and would immediately

lead to a great improvement in all the industries of the country, and especially in the agricultural interest, upon which so many of you depend. But do you believe, do you think, that capitalists, who are the most timid of men, are going to send their money into Ireland, to unbutton their pockets at a time when the persons who claim the future government of Ireland, and declare that it will be in their hands in the course of a few months, are doing everything in their power to show that the law is only made to be broken, and that no contract is sacred? I say, then, that this agitation, and still more any practical result of the agitation, is doing much to destroy the credit of Ireland, and thereby to injure every one of you."

The visit to Ulster had an excellent effect in that Province. It helped to calm the exasperation of the Orange Party against what they considered the callous indifference of ordinary English politicians, and it brought home to people of this country the practical impossibility of establishing an Irish Government to which one-third of the population would be bitterly hostile and openly disobedient. On the other hand, it did not assist Mr. Chamberlain's mission to Washington. The animosity of the Nationalists was roused to fury by his openly fraternizing with their sworn foes; and the word went forth that the American Irishmen were to thwart his Diplomatic undertaking at Washington. Unwisely, perhaps—Mr. Chamberlain does, occasionally, let his temper betray him into telling truths that were better unspoken—he referred to this vindictive plot. The publicity thus attracted to the threat compelled the persons thus exposed to make their word good.

It is unnecessary here to go into the history of the North American Fisheries question. In 1887 it was already more than a century old. Although the United States Government had pressed to an extreme the rights which they possessed under various Treaties, and sometimes strained them beyond any rational interpretation of

the terms, it cannot be pretended that the Dominion Parliament had proved accommodating. After a careful inquiry into all the facts, and a study of the whole situation, extended over some three months, Mr. Chamberlain arranged with the American and Canadian representatives a fairly equitable compromise. Nor was it without difficulty that Mr. Chamberlain induced the Dominion Government to make the concessions necessary to give the Americans a motive for coming to an agreement.

The proposals were, briefly, to reckon the Three-mile Limit in bays and creeks, not from headland to headland, but by an imaginary line drawn across the entrance at the first point when the width did not exceed ten miles. American fishermen were allowed to enter Canadian ports and harbours for the purpose of loading, reloading, and obtaining supplies—rights which had been very severely restricted in the 1818 Treaty. They were even permitted to buy bait in Canada, but only on condition that the taxes on Canadian fish products were abandoned by the United States. The draft Treaty was signed at Washington, but the Republican majority in the Senate declined to sanction any departure from the strict Protectionist policy of the nation—nor did they feel any compunction about stultifying the action of a Democratic Administration.

No practical harm was done by the rejection of the Treaty. Fortunately, the Commission had arranged a *modus vivendi* which averted all friction, and has remained in force to the present time.

The rejection of the Treaty was, however, represented as a personal rebuff to Mr. Chamberlain, and made a subject of exultation by his adversaries. But Lord Salisbury, who appreciated the difficulties with which our Envoy had to contend, was much impressed with the Diplomatic ability he had displayed, and it was, no doubt, on his advice that the Queen offered to reward Mr. Chamberlain's services with a high titular distinction—an honour which was gratefully declined. But the personal importance of this prolonged American visit was not

limited to the objects for which it had been undertaken. Mr. Chamberlain, who had been a widower since 1875, now became engaged to Miss Mary Endicott, daughter of Hon. W. Endicott, Secretary of War in Mr. Cleveland's Administration, to whom he was married on 15th November 1888.

With regard to the Special Commission appointed in 1888 to investigate and report on the charges brought by *The Times* against Mr. Parnell and the Nationalist Party in general, Mr. Chamberlain—though he held that the authenticity of the letters attributed to the Irish Leader ought to be strictly investigated—was also of opinion that the inquiry should not be limited to that topic, but should cover the whole ground of the general indictment. Although Sir William Harcourt, and other Gladstonians, went far beyond the mark when they declared that he was the main instigator of the action taken by the majority of the House of Commons, there is no doubt that he sincerely believed in at least the great bulk of the accusations. That the documents relating to Mr. Parnell in particular had been published in good faith was sufficiently clear; but it was difficult to understand, if he were a maligned man, why he was so obstinately reluctant to take the ordinary legal measures for his own vindication. Though he was to be exonerated by the dramatic exposure of Richard Pigott, little blame can be attached to Unionists—and many English Home Rulers—who had previously believed that Mr. Parnell was the author of the incriminating letters.

The momentary and strictly personal triumph which the Irish Leader achieved before the Commission did not, however, relieve him from his full share of the collective guilt proved against his Party. Nor had Mr. Chamberlain any difficulty in showing, when the Report of the three Judges was under discussion in the House of Commons in 1890, that the Nationalists were unable to claim an acquittal. There could be no "picking and

choosing" among the findings of the Tribunal; and he dwelt effectively on the intimate connection which had been established between some members of the Irish Parliamentary Party and the Physical Force conspirators in America, whose object was to assassinate public men in this country and lay the chief cities of Great Britain in ruins. Hitherto such charges had been brought against the Nationalists only by their opponents, and might on that account carry less general authority. The case was now altered when those allegations had been proved before a Judicial Tribunal, and put on record by the Judges.

After an utterance like this, it was clear that there could no longer be any peace or truce between Mr. Chamberlain and the Parnellites. They had long regarded him with a personal vindictiveness which they did not extend to other Unionists, nor has he been slow to retort upon them. No phrase, perhaps, has given deeper offence than the one in which he described them as a "Kept Party." But, in spite of the bitter recriminations exchanged in Parliament and on the platform, it is to Mr. Chamberlain's credit that, during the hottest period of controversy, he always sought to modify the rigours of imprisonment in the case of adversaries who had brought themselves within the grasp of the Law. It was with his hearty approval that Mr. Balfour decided, in 1889, to sanction certain relaxations of gaol discipline in favour of political prisoners as distinguished from ordinary offenders. Those who know Mr. Chamberlain best, including those who have quarrelled with him, admit that, however sharply he may use his tongue, he does not hug his resentments. Otherwise, it would have been impossible for him to work in harmony either with Lord Salisbury or Lord Hartington, and, on the testimony of both of these old adversaries, he was a good colleague, both in Opposition and in Office. As for the Irish members, he is, probably, surprised that they bear him any ill-will. He had worked hard and made no slight sacrifices before 1885 in the Home Rule cause,

and even after the split in the Liberal Party he had steadily advocated all Measures calculated to advance the material prosperity of Ireland. Quite recently it came on him as something like a moral shock when he learned that a very prominent member of the Nationalist Party had used language about him in America which would have been criminally punishable in England. He took it very much amiss that one of the Colonial Premiers, distinguished for his Imperialist oratory, shortly afterwards sat down to dinner with the author of that brutal expression. For himself, Mr. Chamberlain is conscious towards Ireland of nothing but good intentions and services rendered. As for personal disputes with the Nationalist members of Parliament, he has long ago forgotten them, and wonders that they have not forgiven him.



## CHAPTER X

### CONSERVATIVE-RADICAL LEGISLATION, 1886-1892

Rigid and consistent Tories who, as we have seen, resented and even rebelled against some of the Measures proposed by the Second Salisbury Administration, were apt to forget that the Government were not answerable only to the Conservative Party. The General Election of 1886 had, indeed, resulted in a signal defeat of Mr. Gladstone, but the position was not without embarrassment for the victors. Lord Salisbury had no choice but to take office without a majority in the House of Commons. Though the Conservatives outnumbered by 40 the combined Gladstonians and Parnellites, the balance might at any moment be turned against Ministers by the vote of the Dissident Liberals. Some of them, we have seen, attached themselves without reserve to Lord Hartington, some adhered to Mr. Chamberlain, while others professed a double allegiance, and attended the conferences held by either of the Leaders. Anomalous as the position of this last group was in some respects, it was these rather fluid politicians who eventually brought about the formation of a solid Liberal Unionist Party, and enabled their Chief to treat on almost equal terms with the Conservative Prime Minister. But for their restraining influence, the Radical Unionists might have drifted away from the Whig Unionists. It is true that Mr. Chamberlain had made haste to declare that he should regard Lord Hartington as his own Leader. Though no doubt was entertained as to the good faith of this promise, it was only understood to apply to

the question of Home Rule, and to mean that he would not personally assent to any compromise on that issue without taking his Unionist colleague into confidence and consultation. But a limited co-operation of this character was by no means the same thing as a fusion of Parliamentary forces.

Not many months had passed since Mr. Chamberlain had been engaged in disputes with Lord Hartington as acute as with Lord Salisbury. Practically, the only object as to which they were in hearty accord was that nothing should be done by either that might restore Mr. Gladstone to power. Even on this point, though there was no misunderstanding, there was not absolute agreement. Though Lord Hartington had not formally shut the door against negotiations with his late Chief, his attitude on Home Rule was so uncompromising that no arrangement was practicable. But, as has already been shown, it was not until the year 1887 was well advanced that Mr. Chamberlain openly renounced his last hope of a compromise and reconciliation. Even after he had thus burnt his boats, it was felt that matters would work more smoothly in Parliament, both for himself and his allies, if he were to withdraw for a time from the scene of almost daily conflict. The vehement animus which he throws into controversy, and the answering passion he excites, did not help the Government to pass or administer the exceptional legislation which they considered necessary for Ireland.

Nor amongst the Conservatives themselves was there harmony—or the semblance of it. The extraordinary aptitude which Lord Randolph Churchill displayed as Leader of the House of Commons, and the readiness with which he adapted his experience as a guerrilla to the requirements of official generalship, by no means made up for the disturbing influence he exercised in the councils of the Party. Not until Lord Randolph had retired was Lord Salisbury master in his own Administration, and he had already been compelled to part with Lord Iddesleigh—the

representative of that Moderate Conservatism which the Tory Democrats had set themselves to extinguish. If, after several months of hardly concealed strife, the Prime Minister had rid his Cabinet of an intolerable incubus, he had yet to reckon with Lord Randolph's following in the House of Commons. In some respects their ideas of domestic policy were as advanced as those of the Birmingham Radicals. Indeed, Mr. Chamberlain had confessed that his hopes of Progressive legislation under a Conservative Government were seriously shaken by Lord Randolph's resignation.

It was on this account, perhaps, that during the early period of the Unionist alliance he was far more difficult to deal with than when a few years' experience of the *modus vivendi* had convinced him that the main body of the Conservatives, sometimes at the sacrifice of their own principles, were resolved to carry out their part of the political bargain. It was, of course, a quite informal understanding, and might be renounced on either side at the shortest notice. What was called the Unionist Compact—a definite arrangement, so far as it went—did not relate to general policy. It was simply an agreement that the Conservatives and Liberal Unionists should work together in any Constituency where a vacancy might occur, and that no member of either Party should be accepted as candidate for a seat which had hitherto been represented by a member of the other Party.

It was, therefore, only to be expected while the relations between the Radical Unionists and the Conservative Party were still undefined, and while Mr. Chamberlain himself occupied an anomalous position which he had to justify to his own following, that he would be somewhat exacting in his demands on the Government. To tell the truth, he drove a number of rather hard bargains with Lord Salisbury, whose regular supporters hinted, not obscurely, that they were paying too high a price for the Midlands vote. No complaint was made as to the instalment of Merchant

Shipping legislation which enabled Mr. Chamberlain to carry out a part of the proposals that had miscarried in 1884 when he was President of the Board of Trade. Nor did the stoutest Tory object to the salutary and reasonable provisions of the Mines Regulation Act of 1887, or to the Measure, passed in the same Session, for facilitating the acquisition of Allotments and Cottage Gardens. Indeed, many Conservatives were actively in favour of a scheme that might possibly help in some slight degree to counteract the steadily growing exodus from Village to Town, and which under no conceivable circumstances could do harm either to landlords or farmers. This first, and far the most modest, portion of Mr. Chamberlain's formidable agrarian programme the Conservatives accepted almost with acclamation, nor did they hesitate to claim as much credit for the Measure as if they had been the authors of it. The Sanitary Authorities were henceforth empowered to acquire land for the purpose of making Allotments and Cottage Gardens, and, when the machinery provided was proved by experience to be more cumbrous and costly than had been expected, an Amending Act was passed (1890), which simplified some of the formalities, and considerably reduced the expense.

There was more diversity of opinion expressed, though no serious opposition was offered, with regard to the Small Holdings Act of 1892—passed, almost undisguisedly, in view of the General Election. Conservatives would have good reason to rejoice in the establishment of a thriving class of yeomen-farmers, but, even in the North of England, where the "statesmen" have lingered on, they are, as a rule, only drawing a meagre subsistence from the soil. The attempt to revive a languishing form of industrial life was not regarded as hopeful by country gentlemen who enjoyed practical acquaintance with the conditions of modern, and more or less scientific, agriculture. The experts openly prophesied failure, and politicians with memories that ran a few years back did not forget that

Lord Salisbury had described the proposal as characteristic of "an inveterate Cockney"—a phrase which Mr. Chamberlain had very warmly resented. Moreover, there was danger that the value of large farms might be materially diminished if the land most easily accessible from a village were cut off for the benefit of small proprietors. The experiment was not to Lord Salisbury's taste, and when he yielded to the representations of his Radical supporters, it was not with the best of graces, though, naturally, he would have welcomed any proposal which he thought at all likely to lead to the establishment in this country of such an element of Constitutional stability as is provided in Republican France by the existence of a large class of peasant-proprietors. But the crops which lend themselves easily to *la petite culture* are not found profitable in the climate of England, while the demand here for land, in the neighbourhood of towns large enough to offer a fair market, is so strong that, as a rule, the rent can only be paid by a farmer who has some knowledge of scientific agriculture and is able to use expensive machinery.

Conservatives, therefore, had excellent reasons for looking coldly on the political arguments employed in favour of the Small Holdings Bill, though they might have spared themselves the apprehension which they entertained as to its prejudicial effect on large estates. It has done neither harm nor good because, practically, it has been ignored. A different result might perhaps have been recorded but for a long series of more or less unfavourable seasons, and the increasing competition with cheap foreign products. Since the Act came into operation, the farmers in almost every part of England have been struggling for a bare livelihood, while the village labourers and small tradesmen or artisans have felt no temptation to risk their savings in so unpromising a business. Even the Allotment system has not made as much progress as was expected. At one time the villagers were eager enough to take up small parcels of land, and man-

aged to pay good rents, but as soon as they discovered that it was unprofitable to grow corn their interest in Allotments began to wane; and though the movement has not been absolutely a failure, and in some counties even shows signs of possible development, the general results have been confessedly disappointing. Nothing has been accomplished towards checking the increasing exodus from the villages. All the most capable young men, either because they desire to improve their position, or simply because they wish to get more bustle and gaiety out of life, seize the first chance of employment in the towns. The prospect of acquiring Small Holdings tempts them not at all, and on the Allotments and Cottage Gardens it is not common to find able-bodied men at work. The cultivation is left to women, children home from school, and old men past earning regular wages. So far as it helps to keep the veterans off "the parish," the extension of Allotments has been beneficial, but it has done little, if anything, to enlist recruits for rural industry. The attempts which have been made to cheapen and simplify the transference of real property have been so half-hearted, and the demand for such reform on the part of those who would seem to be most interested in obtaining it has been so ineffective against the covert opposition of the conveyancers, that it is impossible to say whether this part of the agrarian policy of the Birmingham Radicals might not, under more favourable conditions, have resulted in general benefit. But the other heads of their scheme, not being supported by any strong opinion on either side of the House of Commons, have been quietly dropped, and for the present at least, do not seem likely to be revived.

The Bill proposed by the Government in 1887 for the Relief of Irish Tenants, by permitting them to bring up their rents for revision, though cordially adopted by many of the Moderate Conservatives, had been especially demanded by the Radical Unionists as a set-off against the

Coercionist legislation in which they had loyally, though reluctantly, concurred. On the Second Reading Debate the Bill had been accepted by Mr. Chamberlain with some effusion. It was, he said, an honest attempt by Ministers to redeem their pledges, it was generous to a degree, and the Government had gone further than any previous Government. At the same time, he pointed out various points on which he desired further concession to the tenants. His attitude on this question is interesting, since it illustrates the ambiguous position which he still occupied. Had he been taken into formal consultation with Ministers before the Bill was drafted, he would not afterwards have been at liberty to suggest Amendments in the House of Commons. That he claimed this right, and that it was not disputed, shows that Lord Salisbury had only assured himself of the general approval of the Radical Unionists.

Nevertheless, the incident led to a small political crisis; and the Prime Minister convoked a special meeting of his Party, at which he dwelt on the necessity of maintaining the existing understanding as to Home Rule. The new proposals of the Radical Unionists were, it should be mentioned, still more strongly urged by the Loyalist tenants in Ulster, and it was decided that a further sacrifice must be made of Conservative principle. What was demanded was that all tenants who were not leaseholders in perpetuity should be included in the Bill, that the Bankruptcy Clauses should be given up, that creditors should be restrained from employing *fi-fa* against Tenant Right and agricultural produce, and that Judicial Rents should be rendered liable to revision, the reduction being calculated on the price of local produce, and only operating for three years—until a Purchase Bill should be introduced. From the tactical point of view, it was thought undesirable to bring about a double misunderstanding with the Radical Unionists and the Ulster Conservatives. The proposed Amendments were accepted, incorporated in the Bill, and carried through Parliament.

The subsequent Irish Land Legislation of the 1886-1892 Administration, though acceptable to the Radical Unionists, and framed in accord with their views and principles, was, in its main features, the work of the Chief Secretary, Mr. Arthur Balfour. Among the Measures promised in the Queen's Speech of January 1890, was a Land Purchase Bill on an extensive scale. But the better part of the effective period of the Session was spent in discussing the Parnell Report, and, when this controversy was cleared away it was succeeded by another, not so prolonged, but nearly as embittered, on the Licensing Proposals which Mr. Goschen had included in his Budget. His plan—approved by Mr. Chamberlain and other advocates of Temperance legislation who are opposed to the confiscation of licence-holders' interests—was to provide for the easy and almost voluntary extinction of superfluous public-houses. This was to be done by imposing a special Spirit Duty, which should be set apart for the compensation of dispossessed licence-holders—the Trade buying out the Trade, and those finding the money who gained the advantage. But the scheme, though supported by the Church of England Temperance Society, was hotly opposed by the United Kingdom Alliance, and by the bulk of the Liberal Party. It was described as a scheme for the "endowment of publicans," and had to be withdrawn by a Government which had already lost confidence in its hold on the country, and the "whisky money" was allocated to the County Councils for the purposes of Technical Education.

This somewhat ignominious failure of Ministers had to be redeemed, but evidently it would be useless to persist in any ambitious scheme of Irish Land legislation during that Session. Mr. Balfour's proposals were deferred to the Autumn, when two Bills were introduced. The less important of these Measures, which established a Land Department and amended the law as to Land Purchase, was advanced through its preliminary stages



before Christmas; but in the Summer of 1891 it was decided to incorporate with it the Turbary and Redemption of Rent Bills (which became law on 5th August 1891). The other Bill, which was the substantial Measure of the Session, dealt not only with the promotion of Land Purchase, but also with establishing systematic relief for Congested Districts. In the result the latter portion, as developed, has been more successful than the former. The elaborate and ingenious system of checks and counter-checks, recommended by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in order to guard the Imperial Treasury from the risk of loss, tended, no doubt, to hamper the operation of the Act, while the Nationalist Party, exasperated by the charges, both false and true, which they had recently been compelled to answer before the Parnell Commission, did nothing—much less than nothing—to promote the success of Unionist Legislation. In fact, though they were, as a body, equally desirous of agrarian and political concessions, they did not wish the Land Question to be settled before Home Rule had been granted. The one agitation kept up steam for the other. But it would be unfair to lay on Irish politicians the whole blame for the slow and partial operation of Mr. Balfour's Act. It was, indeed, a disappointment rather than a failure. It was successfully employed wherever the owner was willing to sell his land, and the tenant ready to buy it on reasonable terms. But, like subsequent legislation with the same object, it was found to be practically inoperative where either of the parties was too exacting. It held out no special inducement either to vendor or purchaser. It did not offer that "little bit of sugar" which, as City men know, has an effect quite disproportionate to its intrinsic value in getting people to "do business." Against this comparative inefficiency of the Purchase provisions in Mr. Balfour's Act may, however, be set the solid and progressively beneficial results under the Sections relating to the Congested Districts. These,

by themselves, would be a sufficient justification of the time spent by Parliament on the whole Measure.

If such credit as was earned by this Act is chiefly due to the Conservative Ministry, the blame for the abortive Bill for establishing Local Government in Ireland must be distributed between the Radical Unionists and Democratic Tories, who had combined to insist on deferring the General Election until this scheme should have been laid before Parliament. Both Mr. Chamberlain and Lord Randolph Churchill, in the days when they held more or less intimate relations with the Parnellites, had pledged themselves to a qualified form of Home Rule. If they cared to preserve their reputation for consistency, the least they could do was to bring forward some scheme of Local Government. Possibly, if they had been asked, both or either of them, to draft the Ministerial plan, they might have produced a Bill that would not have been received, by Liberals and Nationalists alike, with contumely and derision. But on this point the Ministerialists were by no means inclined to make large concessions to their allies on either side. They believed—and the state of Ireland justified them in believing—that the country was unfit for real administrative liberty. The establishment of local elective bodies would be placing a legal weapon in the hands of tyrannical majorities. In short, the concession of Local Government, if made at all, must be qualified with a series of safeguards and limitations.

The argument was sound enough, but it should have been pressed to its logical conclusion—that the gift should be withheld until it could be offered without reserve. To invite men to manage their own affairs, and at the same time to hold out penalties for misbehaviour, is to exasperate them, not to conciliate. The derision with which the Parnellites received the “Put-’em-in-the-Dock” Clause was, no doubt, overdone. Punishment would have fallen only on bodies that deserved it. But that such a provision

should be necessary was a sufficient condemnation of the whole scheme. Though Ministers carried the Second Reading by a substantial majority, they dropped the Bill; they had done enough to satisfy their allies, and to conform to the Unionist doctrine that no measure of reform which had been accorded to Great Britain should be withheld from Ireland.

Very different was the fate of two other important articles, taken from the Radical Programme, which Mr. Chamberlain successfully pressed on Lord Salisbury's Government—the creation of County Councils throughout England and Wales and the establishment of Free Education. To the former Measure the Conservative Party had long professed an honourable if dilatory affection. They were quickly brought to the point by their Radical friends. Though it might be objected that the administration of county business by the Magistrates and other Local Authorities was generally both efficient and economical, there was no pretence of system and little semblance of Representative control. On these grounds it was decided that county administration must forthwith be assimilated to the principles adopted, about half a century before, for the self-government of the boroughs. The Conservatives were induced to support this scheme because, if they did not undertake it, the Liberals had threatened, when next they came into power, to carry out a root-and-branch reform which, so far as possible, would destroy the influence of country gentlemen in local affairs. By anticipating them, the Conservatives hoped to give the landed interest a chance of preserving, at least, a part of its power, and that, either as elected Councillors or nominated Aldermen, "the Squire and the Parson" would retain some of the importance which they had hitherto enjoyed as Magistrates.

This object, it may here be mentioned, has been attained except in those counties—in Wales, more particularly—where the population is predominantly Radical.

There the country gentlemen have no authority left except what pertains to their judicial functions. But the Measure framed by Mr. Ritchie—a Conservative more Progressive than ordinary Radicals—contained two excrescences. One of these was the creation of purely artificial Counties or County-boroughs, like those of Birmingham and London. This became law. The other miscarried. The institution of District Councils was defeated, because with it Mr. Ritchie had linked a plan of Licensing Reform which aroused the animosity of the Temperance Party. The Liberals were willing enough that the control of the Liquor Trade should be taken from the Licensing Justices, but they fought hard against a scheme that would only enable the District Committees of a County Council to close a public-house on paying compensation to the tenant. This recognition of a claim, whether legal or moral, on the part of the licence-holders was so vigorously resisted that the Government abandoned their proposal. Their general plan having been thus truncated, they did not think it worth while to persist in the clauses for the establishment of District Councils, to which they had intended to transfer all the confused and overlapping functions of the various Local Authorities except the administration of the Poor Law. This they had always held to be too invidious a duty to be entrusted to an elective body answerable only to a small constituency of neighbours.

If the independent Conservatives had been somewhat lukewarm in dealing with County Government, and decidedly suspicious of the provisions that applied to the Metropolis, they felt no dislike for the general object aimed at. As the Measure gradually shaped itself in Parliament, they took to it more kindly and co-operated heartily with their Leaders in making it into a substantial and permanent example of constructive legislation. It was very different with Free Education. This they had denounced in Opposition, and were not more ready to support after they had taken their seats on the Govern-

ment side of the House. They repudiated Lord Salisbury's attempt to gild the pill by calling it Assisted Education—as though he were only contemplating a somewhat wide extension of the powers already existing for the remission of school fees in necessitous areas. It was true, as Lord Salisbury had pointed out in 1885, that in compelling a man to send his children regularly to school the State had assumed an obligation to render the burden as light as possible. But this was a very different thing, the Conservatives argued, from paying for persons who could well afford to pay for themselves. A satisfactory reply to that objection was not discovered—none, certainly, that carried conviction to the malcontents.

The best reason, perhaps, was, that the task of discriminating between parents who deserved and those who did not deserve relief would be both tedious and invidious, and that, if remission became at all general, the machinery for collecting the remainder of the fees would be unduly expensive in proportion to the receipts. Moreover, having gone so far in the direction of Free Education, it would be as well to proceed the whole distance. By adopting the proposal of Mr. Chamberlain, the Government would gratify the Radicals who were on their own side, and deprive those who were opposed to them of a promising cry at the General Election. The demand had been formally put forward by the Birmingham Unionists in the early part of 1889, and their position would be very embarrassing if they continued to support a Ministry that refused to meet their views on this question. In a speech delivered at Birmingham in November of that year Lord Salisbury had hinted that the Government were ready to consider the point—on condition that nothing should be done to injure the Voluntary Schools, and thus diminish the opportunities of the working classes for obtaining Religious Teaching for their children. If the Denominational Schools were to be destroyed through Free Education, it would be “not a blessing, but a curse.”

That, of course, was not Mr. Chamberlain's view. He had always contended, and still believes, that the best arrangement, in an ideal community, would be for the instruction in all State schools to be confined to secular subjects, and that the Religious Teaching should be left to private and voluntary agencies. Nor was this merely an abstract opinion. He had steadily worked for depriving the Denominational schools of any assistance from the Rates or Taxes—although without such a subsidy they could not long be carried on. Nor did he relax this attitude until his informal association with the Conservative Party had hardened into an offensive and defensive alliance—until it was informally understood that he would be ready, when called upon, to take office in a Coalition Ministry. In 1891 we find him saying, at Birmingham, that he should shrink from doing anything to destroy Denominational Education. Under that system provision was made for the teaching of two-thirds of the children in England and Wales, and to get rid of it would involve a capital outlay of £50,000,000 sterling<sup>1</sup> and an increased annual expenditure of £5,000,000. His public recognition of this financial fact was the concession which he made to the Conservatives in return for their adopting Free Education. The scheme in which he co-operated was framed with the intention of compensating the Voluntary Schools for the loss which they would suffer from the abolition of fees. Briefly, it was to give all schools alike a grant of 10s. per annum on the average attendance of children between the ages of five and fourteen—limits which were subsequently extended to three and fifteen respectively. This, it was reckoned, would make good the loss of "school pence," estimated at 3d. a week a head.

Another Clause, however, enabled the Education Department to institute a School Board in any district where

<sup>1</sup> This estimate, which was generally accepted at the time, has since been reduced about 50 per cent.

the accommodation without fees was reported as insufficient. This provision placed almost indefinite powers in the hands of Whitehall, and, as a matter of fact, it was subsequently worked in such a way as to excite general alarm among the supporters of Denominational Schools. This, however, had not been the purpose of the Act of 1891, which was drafted on what was believed at the time to embody a fair compromise between the views of Lord Salisbury and Mr. Chamberlain. When it afterwards became evident that the arrangement had a prejudicial effect on the Voluntary System, Mr. Chamberlain made no difficulty about supporting the amendments required by the Church of England and the Roman Catholics. He has interpreted the bargain of 1891 in a liberal spirit, though not without serious risk to his popularity even amongst his own supporters in Birmingham. This is not the place to describe the furious controversy of last year (1902), but it may be mentioned that his concurrence in the latest Education Act marks no deviation from the line which he laid down eleven years before. He had abandoned the strict Nonconformist ideal of Compulsory Secular Education, not because his faith had weakened in its abstract merits, but because he regarded it as under the circumstances unattainable. He could not insist upon it without breaking his alliance with the Conservatives, and it was more important, he thought, to keep the Home Rule Party out of power than to put an end to the Denominational system.

This was the leading and determining motive of what many Nonconformists call an act of apostasy. The other explanation, on which he has laid almost equal weight, is that no Ministry with which he can co-operate will agree to such a capital outlay and such an increase of yearly expenditure as would be entailed by setting up a complete apparatus of National Secular Instruction. But nothing that Mr. Chamberlain has ever said or done, no understanding into which he has entered, could, logically, pre-

vent him from reverting to his original position—if the country should ever be willing to find the necessary millions, and if the Home Rule question were got fairly out of the way. Yet it cannot be denied that on this point he has—practically, if not in principle—dug a wide gulf between himself and his old Nonconformist associates, nor can it be matter of surprise that, opposed to him as most of them were on every point, they should select this as the special object of their attack.

With the majority of Political Dissenters, though not with all, the question of “Religious Equality” ranks above any other issue in politics; and it is not the least of Mr. Chamberlain’s services to the Unionist cause that he has helped to induce a certain appreciable number of them to concede a temporary pre-eminence to the duty of preserving the existing connection between Great Britain and Ireland. It is necessary to dwell on the sacrifice which Mr. Chamberlain made on this question, the personal price which he paid, because it has often been said that he had things all his own way with Lord Salisbury between 1886 and 1892. As a matter of fact, the Prime Minister only assented to Free Education on condition that the Denominational Schools should not be placed in a worse position than they held before. Which side got the better of the bargain is for those to decide who are ready to estimate things incommensurate. On the principle that Political Reason lies somewhere between opposite enthusiasms, it would seem probable that neither Statesman deserved either the censure passed on his morals by the extremists of his own Party, or the compliments paid to his sagacity by the out-and-out people on the other side.

On Church questions generally there was no hard-and-fast compact between the Conservatives and Radical Unionists. Mr. Chamberlain offered no opposition to the Tithes Bills proposed by Lord Salisbury, and it was with his concurrence that the Act of 1891 was passed. As to Disestablishment, he was not expected, and certainly would



not have consented, to modify or suppress his opinions. But, as a matter alike of good feeling and political expediency, it was clearly incumbent on him to abstain from aggressive action against those institutions which Conservatives are especially pledged to defend. Nor did this tacit understanding impose any serious restrictions. Between 1886 and 1892 the public mind was nearly always fixed on one or other of the various phases of the Irish question. The struggle over the Crimes Act, the exciting incidents that accompanied the administration of it by Mr. Balfour, the publication of the "Parnell Letters," the proceedings of the Commission, the revelations of Major Le Caron, the exposure of Pigott, the partial exculpation of the Irish Leader, followed by his romantic ruin and tragical death, and the unseemly but always amusing quarrels in his Party—these and a number of other piquant Irish episodes made all other matters seem dull and unimportant.

Yet it was a period in which no little history was in the making, both at home and abroad. Besides the matters which have already found mention, warm if passing controversy was excited by such incidents as the involuntary withdrawal of Sir Stafford Northcote from the House of Commons; the disputes and final agreements with Portugal, Germany, and France as to "spheres of influence" in Africa; the misunderstanding with the United States about the Behring Sea Fisheries, and with France about its shore rights in Newfoundland; the abortive Sugar Bounty Convention; the British proposals for the evacuation of Egypt; and the disaster in Manipur. There was much for Unionists to defend or explain, and the Opposition, who had never lost heart, were eagerly pressing every point against the Government. The alliance between the Gladstonians and Parnellites was never so cordial as in 1890 and 1891, and, though Ministers were only winding up business for an appeal to the country on their general policy, they seemed unable to find a favourable moment.

It has generally been said that it was on Mr. Chamberlain's strong representation that Lord Salisbury gave up the idea of dissolving Parliament in 1891. It would be better, it was argued, to carry a scheme of Local Government for Ireland than to meet the demand for Home Rule with a mere negative. The ignominious collapse of the Measure that Ministers brought forward in 1892 served to increase the discredit in which they had been involved, partly by their own somewhat careless management in the House of Commons, partly through the unsparing resistance which they had to encounter. Whether they would have fared better if they had gone before the electors in 1891, it is impossible to say, but when the writs for a General Election were issued at the end of the following June it was the almost universal opinion that they had been beaten before a single poll was recorded. The only doubt was as to the number of Mr. Gladstone's majority.

When the returns were finally adjusted it was found that, with the help of the Irish Nationalists (81), the English Gladstonians (274) had a majority of 40 over the Conservatives (268) and the Liberal Unionists (47). The group which had suffered most heavily in the struggle was the Liberal Unionists. Before the General Election of 1886 they had been 90 strong; they came back only 77; and, in the course of the by-elections which had taken place in the six years since, had been reduced to 65. Now they numbered only 47, and, although the politicians who looked chiefly to the Duke of Devonshire (Lord Hartington) had been even less fortunate than Mr. Chamberlain's followers, the position of the former was less inconvenient because his political opinions on almost every question of the day were so close to Lord Salisbury's that a complete amalgamation would have been comparatively easy, nor would it anywhere have been resented except in a few of the Scottish and Metropolitan constituencies. By maintaining the solidity of the Liberal Unionist Party as he did, the Duke of Devonshire at this time gave more than

he got, since he had to bear a part of the resentment inspired among the Conservatives by the Free Education policy forced on them by Mr. Chamberlain. But the course followed was as prudent in the long run as it was loyal at the moment. Standing by Mr. Chamberlain in the hour of a common adversity, he established the right to partake fully in the rewards of future victory.

It said much for the political prescience of the two Statesmen, and their faith in their cause, that they adhered firmly to their plan—warmly criticised as it was by some of their own supporters as well as by the Conservatives—of keeping up a Party organisation and retaining a Party name distinct from those of their allies. Although, probably, they had no local majority outside certain Midland districts, they could in many places rely on a compact little body of voters sufficient to turn the scale at an election. The Midlands Liberal Unionist Association was founded by Mr. Chamberlain in the summer of 1892—immediately after Mr. Gladstone's success—and was composed almost entirely, he declared, of men who had never belonged to a Conservative Association, and would never agree to "sink themselves in such an organisation." They were thus enabled to maintain a distinctive position and to fight Gladstonian Liberalism on its own ground.

The defeat of the Unionist Party, even the comparative failure of his own section, may have been partly compensated to Mr. Chamberlain by a personal triumph. His own victory over a Gladstonian candidate (by more than 4000 votes) was almost a matter of course. But he felt the warmest pleasure and pride in the return of Mr. Austen Chamberlain for East Worcestershire. It is no secret that Mr. Chamberlain is a warm admirer of his son's political ability, and especially of the tact and address with which he grasps that somewhat incalculable element, "the sense of the House." The elder man has even said in private—when the question had been raised of promoting the younger one to Cabinet rank—that if he felt he were standing in

his son's way he would be willing to retire from public life. In the Debate which was soon to be held in the Commons on the second Home Rule Bill, it was one of the pleasant features that Mr. Gladstone—who never failed in gracious magnanimity—broke off his argument to pay a compliment to the speech delivered by the son of the politician whom he regarded as his most formidable adversary.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE HOME RULE ADMINISTRATION

The majority of 40 with which Mr. Gladstone came out of the General Election of 1892 was by no means solid and trustworthy. The split between the seventy-two Anti-Parnellites, who had insisted on the retirement of their Leader from public life, and the nine "Parnellites" who adhered to Mr. Redmond, was not purely a personal quarrel. The more numerous group had established an effective alliance with the English Home Rulers, and were prepared to trust Mr. Gladstone and to accept any Bill which he might offer them, though on the tacit understanding that if the terms were deemed insufficient they should be treated as only an instalment of the Irish claim—something paid on account. Mr. Redmond's little group posed as *intransigents*, and would take, they said, nothing but an immediate settlement in full. It was evident, therefore, even before the meeting of the new Parliament, that on some critical Division they might either withdraw their support from Mr. Gladstone or even transfer it to the Unionist Party. But it was equally certain that they would not venture on either course at the very beginning of the Session, or express dissatisfaction until they had seen the Bill which the English Home Rulers would propose. They must bide their time.

In deciding to meet Parliament, instead of offering to resign on the result of the General Election, Lord Salisbury followed the more usual though not invariable custom. The Unionists had everything to gain by contesting every

inch of fairly tenable ground. The general Debate on the policy of the outgoing Government was in several ways interesting: not least, because Mr. Asquith, who had lately been asking certain inconvenient questions about his Leader's scheme of Home Rule, had been put up to move a Vote of Want of Confidence. Incidentally, he taunted the Conservatives with having abandoned the traditions of their Party and entered on a course of "advanced" legislation in order to conciliate "a small and dwindling band of Dissident Liberals."

This was a taunt that Mr. Chamberlain was not likely to overlook. He delivered one of his best fighting speeches. First he dealt with Mr. Healy, who had endeavoured, on technical grounds, to exclude him from the discussion, by remarking that whenever it was desired to exhibit personal discourtesy towards any man—or (after a significant pause) any woman—the honourable and learned member always presented himself to accomplish it! This rasping allusion to the controversy about Mr. Parnell's private conduct put the Unionists into high good humour, and in an equal degree exasperated the Nationalists. Referring to the reserve which Mr. Gladstone had practised with regard to his new Home Rule plan, Mr. Chamberlain argued that, now the Opposition Leaders had obtained a majority, they were bound to set out their policy. As it was, they proposed to take office without one word of explanation of their domestic programme. As to Foreign Affairs, he trusted that they would be placed in Lord Rosebery's hands, for the country had confidence in him. Otherwise we might wake up some fine morning to find that preparations had been made to evacuate Egypt without consulting the House of Commons. The Democracy were not in favour of "a policy of scuttle."

What sort of agreement, he asked, was there in domestic matters among the supporters of Mr. Gladstone? What about the Welsh members, and the Labour members? As for the Independent Labour Party, he would

believe in it when he saw it! Even on Home Rule, Mr. Labouchere had declared that it ought to be shelved for an indefinite period, while Sir George Trevelyan had once said that he would never consent to it until every Constitutional method had been exhausted! As for Mr. Labouchere himself, he had indeed been somewhat sobered by the prospect of approaching responsibility. (This was a peculiarly disagreeable remark, since it was already known by those behind the scenes that the member for Northampton would not be included in Mr. Gladstone's Ministry.) But, Mr. Chamberlain went on, how reconcile the interests of the Cabinet with those of *Truth*? And how did the Irish Party like the idea of two Cabinet Ministers who would do their best to prevent the Liberal Party from becoming a Home Rule Party?

He produced, as his habit was, a small but well-assorted collection of extracts from the speeches and writings of the chief men on the other side, and showed that the demands made by Mr. Redmond were absolutely inconsistent with declarations made even by such thorough-going Home Rulers as Sir William Harcourt, Mr. John Morley, and Mr. Gladstone himself. If the new Government kept faith with England they must quarrel with the Nationalists. Under such circumstances how could a Ministry retain any stable existence. How long was all British Legislation to be "made ducks and drakes of" by the Irish Party? Finally, he urged the wisest and most sensible members of the Opposition to reconsider their position—they would find it impossible to carry out the policy to which they were pledged.

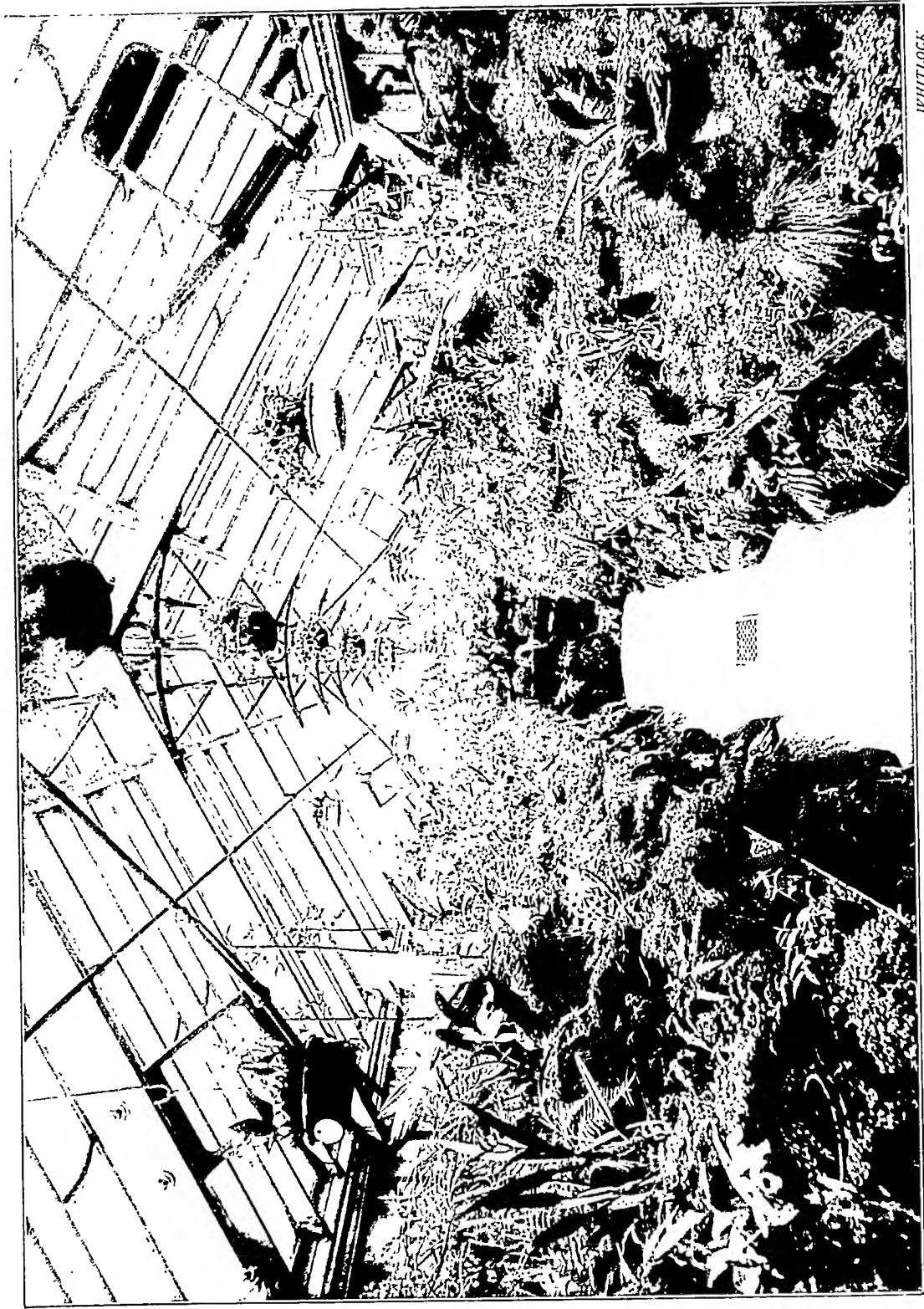
This appeal to the moderation of the Gladstonians may have been made in good faith, but, even if any of them had come to Westminster with open minds, words like these were not likely to exercise a calming influence on the House—the speaker had jeered in turn at every group of the composite majority, and irritated such moderate men as may have been sitting on the Opposition





### ORCHID HOUSE, Highbury

The conservatories and gardens of Highbury are a special feature of the place, and among these the orchid houses are almost world-famous. There are ten of them, each with tessellated floor, and provided, like the rest of the house, with electric light. Mr. Chamberlain keeps a private catalogue of his collection, and his gardeners say that he knows every one of the varieties belonging to him.



WHITLOCK

THE ORCHID HOUSE, Highbury



benches. Nothing is less calculated to turn the vote of a hesitating politician than a public warning that he is being duped by his Leaders. It is the way of Members of Parliament to think well of themselves, and the least influential items like to fancy that they are pulling the Party strings. To tell the truth, Mr. Chamberlain does not possess the power of conciliating those whom he despises—he does not suffer fools gladly. He treats them as if they had no more importance than they really possess, and lacks the grave urbanity with which Mr. Gladstone would, if necessary, listen to advice and remonstrances to which he had no intention of paying any practical attention. But if Mr. Chamberlain's speech on this occasion failed in its ostensible object, it accomplished what was quite as useful to the Unionists—it put them into good heart, and, though the Division showed that every member on both sides had “voted straight,” the defeat in the Lobby was compensated by the honours of Debate.

The transference of power which was accomplished in the course of a few days by the resignation of Lord Salisbury (15th August) and the acceptance of office by Mr. Gladstone, left Mr. Chamberlain and the Radical Unionists in a position of comparative irresponsibility. Though they had arrived at a fairly complete understanding with the Conservatives, as to the course which they would follow when the Gladstonians should be ejected from office, they were free, for the present, to play for their own hand. Mr. Chamberlain had, perhaps, somewhat anticipated this enfranchisement by his adumbration of a scheme for Old Age Pensions (which will be dealt with subsequently), and by the promulgation of other less sweeping proposals. His new programme was conveniently summed up in an Article which he published in *The Nineteenth Century* (November 1892). The chief items were, (1) statutory control of the hours of work in mining and other especially dangerous or laborious call-

ings; (2) local regulation of the hours of employment in shops; (3) the establishment of arbitration tribunals for trade disputes; (4) compensation to workmen or their legal representatives for injury or death not caused by the fault of the sufferer; (5) old-age pensions for deserving poor persons; (6) control over the immigration of foreign paupers; (7) increasing the power of Local Authorities to carry out improvements and provide for the better housing of the poor; and (8) enabling them to advance money to working men who desired to purchase their dwelling-houses.

The writer was not unaware that certain members of the Conservative Party would look askant upon some of his proposals. They did not conceal their dislike of the Progressive policy adopted by their Leaders, and declared that Lord Salisbury and Mr. Balfour had already made too great concessions to Liberal Unionist pressure. This, he said, was a complaint that should be considered in connection with the common accusation that the Liberal Unionists had become more reactionary than the most extreme of the Tories. But he did not feel much misgiving as to the attitude of the bulk of the Party. Once again he pointed out, what he had admitted in his Pre-Unionist days, that "in social questions the Conservatives have always been more progressive than the Liberals, and in their latest legislation have only returned to the old Tory traditions." Almost all the reforms relating to Labour questions had been initiated by Tory Statesmen, and most of them had been passed by Tory Governments. The Factory and Workshop Acts, the Mines Regulation Act, Merchant Shipping Legislation, the Acts relating to Sanitation, Artisans' Dwellings, Land Purchase, Allotments, Small Holdings, and Free Education, were all Conservative, and it was therefore historically inaccurate to represent the Tory Party as opposed to social legislation. He did not add—it would have been indecorous and impolitic to mention—that a good portion of the list of Measures which he had quoted

had been pressed by himself and his allies on the not altogether gracious acceptance of the Conservative Party.

The compliment was adroit, and proved useful to Conservative candidates at by-elections; but it was not quite to the taste of hard-shell Tories to be told, with an air of patronage, that they had been practising Socialism without knowing it! The name was alarming, although the doctrines attributed to them were not Socialism at all, but only that State Socialism which in practical Germany had been adopted by so Conservative a Statesman as Bismarck — adopted with the very purpose of strengthening the existing order of things. From the real and more dangerous Socialism, so far as he had ever favoured it, Mr. Chamberlain had now cut himself adrift. He expressly disclaimed sympathy with those International developments which aimed at a general disorganisation of the industrial system and preached a political crusade of Labour against Capital. The condition of the working classes, he believed, was better than it had been half a century before, and it was steadily being improved. He had no patience with “self-constituted representatives of Labour,” who asserted that working men were “still in a state of misery and servitude.” It was not true that discontent was seething in their breasts, that a “stupendous awakening was to come”; that all past efforts for their intellectual emancipation and material welfare had been “mere tinkering and empiricism.” It was absurd to suppose that “the New Unionism—or the New Collectivism—or some brand-new device of Continental philosophers, or of hitherto unappreciated geniuses of home manufacture”—would elevate them to “heights of co-operative prosperity and collective enjoyment of which, in their dull acceptance of the existing order, they had not yet dreamed.”

Mr. Chamberlain was especially distrustful of the New Unionism which, for the time, seemed to have fascinated the imagination of the working classes, and whose exponents had captured many of the old-fashioned Trade

organisations. It seemed to him to go beyond what was reasonably attainable when it advocated large schemes of social reconstruction which it proposed to carry by national and even by international action. It welcomed the assistance of Continental associations, some of which were reasonably suspected of leanings towards Anarchism. The central idea of the New Unionism—that the interests of Labour were opposed to those of Capital—was inconsistent with that school of Political Economy to which Mr. Chamberlain had, hitherto, more or less adhered. He had consistently asserted, and in the most uncompromising terms, that Labour was entitled to a larger share in profits than it had ever yet received, but he looked on Master and Man as partners, not as antagonists. He especially disliked the intolerance displayed by the New Unionism towards those who remained outside it—an intolerance which sometimes took the form of actual oppression. Nor was it certain some of the demands made in the name of Labour would be endorsed by the general opinion of the working classes. There was nothing to show that the majority in the different trades would vote for limiting the hours of work to eight in the day, though he was willing to see the experiment tried in the case of the mining industry.

The new Parliament having been prorogued almost as soon as the change of Ministry had been effected, no definite announcement of Mr. Gladstone's policy could be expected before the opening of the 1893 Session (which was fixed for 31st January) and the only important Administrative act of the Government was the nomination of a small Commission, with Mr. Justice Mathew as Chairman, to report what steps should be taken for reinstating the Evicted Tenants in their holdings. Nevertheless, it had become known that, in order to satisfy as many as possible of the combined groups who composed the majority, mention would be made in the Queen's Speech of all the leading articles in the Newcastle Programme.

A week before the meeting of Parliament, Mr. Cham-

berlain felt himself justified in criticising the position of Ministers. Referring to their exercise of patronage, he remarked that they were "stuffing" the provincial benches and crowding the Local Boards in Ireland with their own "partisan nominees." It did not look, he said, as if they expected to stay where they were! As for the Home Rule Bill, no one had been consulted except the Anti-Parnellites—the motto of the Government was "Only Irish need apply." After six months' tenure of power, a Ministry which had promised an all-round Revolution could only point to having allowed public meetings in Trafalgar Square, and appointed a few women to inspect workshops. It was almost pathetic! In Egypt the Government had very wisely thrown over the policy which Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Morley had led Europe to expect, but in Uganda they appeared once more to be following the fatal policy of "drifting." Mr. Gladstone, it was known, had determined to retain the Irish members at Westminster, and this, it was suggested, should prevent Mr. Chamberlain from condemning the principle of the forthcoming Home Rule Bill, since this was what he had himself urged in 1886 and 1887. That view he could not accept. Compromises which had seemed feasible then would now be sheer madness. There was no sign that the supremacy of the Imperial Parliament would be "seriously and practically maintained." No, the Unionists could make no terms with the Gladstonians. They would meet Parliament determined to resist a policy which began by betraying the interests of the Loyalists in Ireland, and would end in betraying the interests of Great Britain.

The speech was important not only because it separated Mr. Chamberlain by an impassable gulf from any probable scheme of Home Rule, but also because it contained, though not the first, yet the most emphatic assertion of that Imperialism of which Mr. Chamberlain has since been recognized as the chief exponent. Until the proposal to dismember the United Kingdom had been



raised in an acute form, his Imperial sentiment, though never quite dormant even in the unfortunate period between 1880 and 1885, had been kept subordinate to what he considered the far more urgent need for domestic reform. The relative importance of the internal and external affairs of the country had been inverted by the imminent danger of a Government being established on our flank which certainly would not be friendly, and might become actively hostile—on which we could not rely, even for neutrality, if we were engaged in war with any foreign Power. It was this consideration—more strongly, perhaps, than the rights of the Ulstermen—which had turned Mr. Chamberlain's thoughts in the direction of National Defence, and for the time to shut out every other object for which he had been working.

The one duty of an English Statesman, he now felt, was to protect this country from foreign aggression, and it was an essential part of this policy to keep Ireland beyond the reach of Continental intrigue. The mere alarm, the possibly unfounded apprehension, of such a risk, would be sufficient to paralyse industrial progress by constantly recurrent panic. Everything else must be sacrificed for the sake of maintaining the sense of national security. From this opinion, which henceforth became his dominating sentiment, it was an easy and almost inevitable transition to that Imperial patriotism which he has since set himself to organise and develop. Without our Foreign and Colonial trade, and all that it involves, the British Isles must rapidly sink to the level of a second-rate Power. We should be unable to support our population except on a bare subsistence, and we should have no outlet for the energies of those who required a wider career. We should have to settle down tamely to cultivate our petty cabbage-garden—and the soil would be worse than *Candide's*. The idea that our commerce and manufactures should be allowed to dwindle was unthinkable to one who had pushed his way to the front in the bustling, com-

petitive world of Birmingham, and who embodied in his own nature not a little of the self-confidence and aggressive energy that distinguish his fellow-citizens. They are unalterably convinced that England is the greatest country in the world, and that Birmingham is the centre and source of its political vigour.

The Queen's Speech verified alike the hopes and fears expressed a week before by Mr. Chamberlain. The determined action taken by Lord Cromer in Egypt, supported by the resolute attitude of Lord Rosebery at home, had demolished any expectation that we should withdraw from the Nile Valley, and the Government announced that our garrison there would be strengthened, though they formally renewed the old futile assurances that the Occupation was but temporary. In Uganda, however, the "policy of drifting" was barely concealed by the appointment of a Commissioner to draw up a Report on the state of affairs in that region. The state of Ireland was declared to be satisfactory, and the Home Rule Bill was described as intended to afford contentment to the Irish people, relief to Parliament, and additional securities for the strength and union of the Empire. Other subjects proposed for legislation were the Registration Law, the Duration of Parliaments, One-man One-vote, Employers' Liability, Hours of Labour for Railway Servants, the Conspiracy Law in Trade Disputes, Enlargement of the Powers of the London County Council, and the Suspension of Appointments in the Welsh and Scottish Churches. Even this list does not exhaust the "measures of public utility" which the Government had adopted from the Newcastle Programme.

To set down such an agenda paper for Parliament was to invite that sort of organised opposition which the Government of the day always regard as wilful Obstruction. If Mr. Gladstone had sought to conciliate every group of his supporters by giving to each a promise of taking up its own pet reform, he had also irritated every section

of a vigorous and powerful minority. To tell the truth, however, the resistance would have been equally prolonged if no other Measure had been brought before Parliament than the Home Rule Bill which Mr. Gladstone intended, at all costs, to force through the House of Commons. A scheme so intricate and comprehensive contained so many proposals which offered ground for fair discussion that no ordinary Session would have sufficed to dispose of it. Nor can it be denied that the Leaders of the Opposition insisted to the utmost on their rights, and, especially in Committee, took no pains to prevent their followers from adopting dilatory tactics. There was, indeed, some basis for the charge of Obstruction—enough, at least, to justify Ministers in the summary course to which they were eventually compelled to resort. It was their main object to get the Bill through the Commons and throw on the Lords the odium of rejecting it. They would thus establish their good faith towards their Irish allies, and provide themselves, when necessary, with a popular cry for the next General Election. The policy which was most in favour with the Party Managers was to follow up the Home Rule Bill with other Measures—such as Welsh Disestablishment and One-man One-vote—which the Peers would be equally certain to reject, and thus force them, according to an old phrase used by Mr. Chamberlain, to “fill up the cup” of their iniquities.

This being accomplished, the Gladstonians could go to the country on a series of questions on which the two Houses had been in conflict, and ask for a general declaration in favour of the Popular as against the Hereditary Chamber. It was not a course to which Mr. Gladstone was personally inclined—he had always avoided raising that issue in its most direct form—but he made no objection to his followers holding it out as a menace to the Opposition. The combined Unionist Party were, of course, bent on thwarting it—the Conservatives and Moderate Liberals, because they disliked the imputation

of relying solely on the Peers; the Radicals because they might find it somewhat inconvenient to be engaged in the active defence of those hereditary privileges which a few years before they had so vigorously impugned. Moreover, with so small a majority as Mr. Gladstone had at command, there was always the possibility, especially as the Redmondite vote was notoriously uncertain, that the Government might one evening be caught at a disadvantage and beaten in the Lobby. It was known that a certain number of the Gladstonians were but lukewarm in the support of Home Rule, and it was hoped that a few of them, enough to turn the scale, might find an excuse for failing the Government on some important Division, and thus quietly getting rid of the Measure,—certainly for that Session, and perhaps for the rest of a Parliament which, in any case, could not be long-lived. No such accident was allowed to happen. Mr. Gladstone was too consummate a tactician, he was too well served by his lieutenants, and his Party were too vigilantly kept up to the mark by their Irish associates. But if the Unionists could not destroy the Bill, at least they might delay it; and it would be something to the good if they could exhaust their antagonists by a prolonged struggle. This is the explanation of tactics which did not altogether conform to a correct Parliamentary standard. But though they set a bad precedent—which was certain to be followed, and bettered, by their adversaries on the next convenient occasion—their action was, at least, extenuated by the grave importance of the issue at stake. If the Unionists did unduly strain the forms of Parliamentary procedure they were fighting, they thought, in defence of the unity of Parliament itself.

Whatever complaint was to be made subsequently as to the conduct of the Unionist minority in Committee, the Debates on the First and Second Reading were admirably conducted on both sides of the House, and at the time were highly interesting. The outline which Mr.

Gladstone presented (13th February 1893) of his revised scheme was, briefly:—

- (1) The establishment of an Irish Legislature, consisting of a Council and an Assembly, with power to make laws on exclusively Irish affairs.
- (2) The supreme authority of the Imperial Parliament was not to be impaired or restricted.
- (3) Certain subjects were reserved from the Irish Legislature—especially matters relating to the Crown, Peace and War, Dignities and Titles, the law relating to Treason and to Aliens, and everything relating to external trade.
- (4) The Irish Legislature was prohibited from interfering with religious or personal freedom.
- (5) The Viceroy would be nominated by the Crown for six years, and the office would be subject to no religious disabilities.
- (6) He would have a Cabinet—an Executive Committee of the Irish Privy Council.
- (7) He would veto Bills on the advice of that Cabinet, and subject to the instructions of the Crown.
- (8) The Council would consist of 48 members elected by persons rated above £20 a year, and members would sit for eight years.
- (9) The Assembly would contain 103 members returned by the existing Constituencies for five years.
- (10) The validity of an Irish Act might be questioned by the Viceroy or the Secretary of State, and would be determined by the Privy Council.
- (11) The Royal Irish Constabulary was to be gradually reduced, and eventually superseded by a local police.
- (12) Irish members would be retained at Westminster, but would be forbidden to vote on any question relating solely to Great Britain or any taxation not levied in Ireland.
- (13) A financial settlement was proposed, by which nearly £2,500,000 was claimed for Ireland's contribution to Imperial purposes, while on the credit side there were rather more than £5,500,000. When the expenditure on Civil Government had been deducted from the latter amount, the Irish Exchequer would start with a balance of about £500,000.

It is unnecessary to recapitulate the main points in the discussion that followed Mr. Gladstone's remarkable exposition of this famous Bill, except so far as to indicate Mr. Chamberlain's position. He reasserted his belief in

the Prime Minister's cardinal principle, that the widest measure of Local Government should be given to Ireland that would be consistent with the unity of the Empire, the supremacy of Parliament, and the protection of minorities. He objected to this Bill because it did not satisfy those conditions. If Ireland had a separate Parliament, there would be no Imperial supremacy—she would be a standing danger to the Empire—her political condition was controlled by her geographical situation. But Mr. Gladstone's scheme, though it went too far, would not satisfy the Irish people. They were prohibited from dealing with Religion or Education, and from controlling their own trade. This was sowing the seed of future discontent, which would assert itself in the "time of England's emergency and Ireland's opportunity." Even if the present Nationalist Leaders expressed contentment, they could not bind their successors. If we were engaged in war with a great Power, and if the Irish Parliament refused its contribution to Imperial taxation, how could the money be collected? The police, the civil servants, the judiciary, would be in the hands of the Irish Assembly. How prevent the drilling and arming of a people peculiarly apt in military affairs? The lives of landowners, "land-grabbers," and bailiffs would not be worth a moment's purchase. What could the Imperial Parliament do when the whole Executive was in the hands of the Irish Legislature? Suppose it had been resolved in Dublin to endow the Roman Catholic Church? If the Veto of the Crown were to be exercised, the Irish Ministry would resign *en bloc*, and there would be none to take its place. The plan for the partial retention of the Irish members at Westminster would not work. They would be kept dangling about the Lobby, and never know when they would be required in the House. The only feasible form of Home Rule was either the establishment of "an enlarged London County Council" or the institution of four separate Parliaments for England, Ireland, Scotland, and

Wales, with one Imperial Parliament supreme over all. Moreover, the Bill gave no protection to minorities, none to Ulster. If Ulster made up her mind to fight, no Liberal Government would be strong enough to coerce her into subjection. Finally, it was idle to say that if the new Constitution were found to work badly it might be withdrawn. That could not be done without provoking Ireland to the verge of insurrection. It was an irrevocable step which Parliament was asked to take, but never in the history of the world had a risk so tremendous been encountered with so light-hearted an indifference to its possible results.

In the Second Reading Debate, which was not commenced (6th April) until after the brief Easter Recess, Mr. Chamberlain dwelt chiefly on those points over which he had passed somewhat lightly in the previous discussion. Mr. Gladstone, he said, had enlarged on the evil effects of the old misrule of Ireland by England. But in 1869, in 1870, and again in 1881, he had expressed faith in the great reforms which he proposed and carried out. The country was told that they would have a conciliatory effect—on each occasion there was a promise of “a union of hearts.” Had these reforms, then, been failures? Had these predictions been falsified? That, certainly, was not Mr. Gladstone’s view! Then, if conciliation had produced great results, why not give it a longer trial? Indeed, it was true that a marvellous improvement had taken place in the state of Ireland—and even in its relations with England—during the last twenty, thirty, and fifty years.

In spite of the faults in Mr. Gladstone’s Bill, Mr. Chamberlain suggested that the English people—so sick were they of the Irish question—might accept the settlement proposed if they believed it would be final. But how could it be final when it was rejected by one-third of the nation, by the vast majority of the propertied and educated classes? As for the professions of the Nationalist Leaders, Mr. Chamberlain reminded the House that Mr.

Parnell had declared in public that he regarded the first Home Rule Bill as "closing the great controversy." A few days afterwards he told his colleagues that he only accepted it *pro tanto*, and it was nothing but a "Parliamentary Bill." Nor, in fact, did this second Bill contain the elements of finality. Would the Nationalists avow that they accepted the proposed Veto of the Crown, exercised on the advice of a British Minister, in the same sense as the English and Scotch supporters of the Government accepted it? After pointing out the various limitations on Self-Government contained in the Bill, limitations in which an Irish Legislature was most unlikely to acquiesce, Mr. Chamberlain passed on to examine the financial provisions, which, he said, were too liberal. Generosity to Ireland as long as she remained a part of the United Kingdom was proper enough, but no exceptional consideration would be due to an independent nation. Most of her taxation going back to her for local purposes, she only contributed about one twenty-fifth part of the Imperial expenditure, whereas she ought to pay one-twelfth—yet already the Irish members were calculating that she should not pay more than one thirty-fifth. As for War expenditure, a Nationalist organ had just declared that Ireland ought to contribute nothing, as she could have no interest in any War waged by Great Britain. A pretty look-out for the Union of Hearts!

The safeguards suggested in the Bill were worthless—they could only be enforced by Civil War. Without the good-will of the Irish people, they were not worth the paper they were written on! Referring to an Article which he had recently published in the *Nineteenth Century*, Mr. Chamberlain said that Mr. Gladstone's criticism was a monstrous travesty of his opinions. His censure on Irish methods had applied not to the whole people out of Ulster, but to the Leaders of the Nationalist Party—who threw away all principle, abused all power, and had no sympathy with England, or sense of justice. He did not attribute to



the Irish people any "double dose of original sin." It was Mr. Gladstone who gifted them with a double dose of "very original virtue." Mr. Chamberlain admired Mr. Gladstone's "almost boundless faith." Parliament was invited to trust to their good intentions for the defence of the lives and property of the Loyalists; to their gratitude, for assistance in the hour of necessity. Mr. Chamberlain did not believe in the miracles promised by Mr. Gladstone, which could change the hearts of men and alter the springs of human action. "The possible danger," he said, "is too great, and the possible gain is too small. If this Bill were passed, and we were to escape—by a good fortune which would be as unexampled as it would be undeserved—from disaster and disgrace which we had rashly provoked, still you have not been able to give us even a plausible expectation of any advantage corresponding to the risks which you wish us to incur."

The Second Reading having been carried on 21st April by 43 votes (347 against 304), on 8th May the Committee stage was commenced. Mr. Chamberlain opened for the Opposition by moving that the first Eight Clauses should be postponed until the Ninth—on which the question of Imperial supremacy turned—had been settled. This, after all, was the fundamental provision in the Bill. The suggestion was not unreasonable, and, had it been accepted, the subsequent course of the discussion might, conceivably, have been accelerated. Naturally, however, Mr. Gladstone objected to having his Bill turned inside out at the bidding of the Opposition. Besides, he had tactical reasons for not showing his hand on this question until the last possible moment. The hot Debate which followed was but the first of many almost disorderly discussions, and on 28th June the Fifth Clause was still unfinished. On that evening Mr. Gladstone stated, with his usual Parliamentary euphemism, that "avoidable delays" had occurred in the taking of Divisions, and that next day he would

move a Resolution which would expedite the course of business. This was for the "Closure by Compartment," or procedure by "Guillotine," which has since been invoked by a Unionist Government, and which, for good or evil, seems to have become an established part of our Parliamentary system.

Curiously enough, it was adopted at the instigation of that Nationalist Party which had invented and perfected the art of Obstruction, and which now devised the one absolutely effective remedy for the mischief which it had introduced into the House of Commons. At the time it was denounced as a tyrannical innovation — far more drastic, as Mr. Balfour pointed out, than Mr. Gladstone's action in 1881, when he closed everybody who differed with him, and suspended the Irish members so as to pass the Clauses of his Crimes Act during their absence. That was a case of urgent necessity: there was no urgency for the Home Rule Bill. In order to shorten the discussion, the word had been passed to the Gladstonians not to make speeches that would justify replies. But Mr. Chamberlain was not going to lose his opportunity. Never has he been more incisive and irritating than when he got up to "compassionate" Mr. Gladstone on the position in which he was placed. Nobody believed that he was willingly doing his present work!

"There sit the men," he exclaimed, as he pointed to the Irish members, "who pull the strings of the Prime Minister of England. Under the threats of his Irish masters, under the pressure of his least experienced supporters, he comes down here to move a Resolution which is contrary to all the principles of his public life." It was one more surrender to revolt. The Government were taking advantage of their brief tenure of office, of their casual majority, to betray the interests of the country, sacrificing them to men who had been convicted of conspiracy against those interests. The defects of the Bill had been concealed from the country, and the concealment was

almost fraudulent. The Government dared not submit the details to the people. Their tactics were not the tactics of Statesmen, but the tactics of Tammany Hall. Nevertheless, he was glad they had played their last card. The British Empire was being sold by private treaty, and it was natural that the Irish Party, on completing this underhand bargain, should say, "Why debate any more? We are satisfied—*pro tanto!*"

In spite of Unionist denunciation, and some misgivings among the English Home Rulers, the Closure by Compartment was carried by a majority (32) only slightly below the normal strength of the Government. The result was to hasten the end, but not to soften the asperities, of Debate. A characteristic "scene" arose when Mr. Dillon attempted to justify his threats of revenge on the Irish minority by saying that his words had been spoken under a sense of indignation at the "Mitchelstown Massacre." Mr. Chamberlain—always ready with his dates and "cuttings"—blandly pointed out that Mr. Dillon's speech had been delivered about nine months before the incident said to have provoked it!

On 12th July Mr. Gladstone confessed, what had long been felt, that the "in-and-out" arrangement proposed for Irish members at Westminster was not one that could be carried. The only practicable alternative was to leave them the right to vote on all questions, though it was a method not without "its inconveniences." This concession to the Irish Party was resented by many of the English Home Rulers; and, of course, it was attacked by the Conservatives. It was a change of front, Mr. Balfour said, made on no better ground than that the Whips said it would pay in the Division Lobby. A Government which had no convictions, or, at any rate, did not act upon its convictions—which rather prided itself on indicating that its convictions were opposed to its policy—was not worth attacking! Mr. Gladstone retorted that Ministers did not care whether Mr. Balfour

attacked them or not. The position of the Irish members at Westminster was not vital to the Home Rule Question, and therefore it was a matter on which the Government thought that the "judgment of the country" should prevail. This gave Mr. Chamberlain one of those chances which he never misses. Did the Government want to know "the judgment of the country"? Let them consult it. He challenged them to dissolve Parliament on that issue. This was a question on which the Prime Minister said the British people were to have a determining voice! Here Mr. Gladstone remarked that Great Britain already had such a voice, since it possessed a majority of the House. Mr. Chamberlain retorted that in the vital division on the Bill the vote of Great Britain—as distinct from that of Ireland—had been cast against Ministers. He did not conclude without remarking that the real question was whether the interests of Great Britain were to be controlled by "delegates from Ireland nominated by Priests, elected by Illiterates, and subsidised by enemies of the country!"

This was by no means the warmest encounter between Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Chamberlain. It happened, on the day appointed for the final Act of Closure, that Mr. Chamberlain had moved an Amendment which led Mr. Gladstone to charge him with playing the part of the Devil's Advocate. The vague, inoffensive phrase delighted the more ignorant members of the House,—who believed that something very terrible had been uttered,—and Mr. Gladstone, warmed with applause, deviated from his usual courtesy to accuse Mr. Chamberlain of constantly and deliberately attributing to men who had a right to stand on a level with him, and who had been at one time his colleagues, and believed themselves to be his friends, motives which were directly contrary to their professions, and which they indignantly disclaimed.

Mr. Chamberlain described this as a "ferocious speech," and it must be remembered that Mr. Gladstone's impres-

sive manner lent a force to the spoken rebuke which does not appear in the printed words. It led to a memorable retort, and a disgraceful scene. Mr. Chamberlain taunted the majority with regarding the Bill as perfect and unimprovable. Even when a change was made, they applauded the alteration. After referring to the numerous and important modifications which had been introduced in Committee, he said that the Bill had been changed in its most vital features, yet it had always been found perfect by honourable members behind the Treasury Bench. "The Prime Minister calls 'Black,' and they say 'It is good': the Prime Minister calls 'White,' and they say 'It is better.' It is always the voice of a God! Never since the time of Herod has there been such slavish adulation!" As the name of Herod was pronounced, the Irish broke out with cries of "Judas." At ordinary times the Chairman would have intervened with a formal rebuke, somebody would have apologised, and the incident would have been over. But Mr. Chamberlain's taunt was uttered, and the reply given, almost at the moment when the final Closure was to operate. The Irish were exultant, the younger Tories exasperated, and on both sides, perhaps, some were not rigidly sober. The pent-up feelings and the undigested liquor asserted themselves together, and a trifling altercation between two members led to a free-fight on the floor of the House between Conservatives and Nationalists, the confusion being much increased by certain amiable gentlemen who mingled in the fray with the purpose of drawing off the fighting contingents. If the riot was disgraceful, the conclusion was ridiculous. The Speaker was sent for, and on his appearance the members slunk back to their seats like so many school-boys caught playing in their lesson hour.

It is unnecessary to follow the subsequent course of the Home Rule Bill, though Mr. Chamberlain opposed it at every stage, as actively as if it had some chance of escaping a summary extinction in the House of Lords.

Though his elaborate arguments and pungent phrases did nothing to delay its formal progress, they caused him to be recognized, more fully even than Lord Salisbury and Mr. Balfour, as the Champion of Unionism, and first won him his place in the affections of the rank-and-file of the Conservative Party.

The sentiment was to be strained hereafter,—and severely strained,—but it never ceased to operate. Even when sharp misunderstandings arose, the thought of a rupture was not entertained. Now and again, it is true, he taxed the patience of his allies somewhat heavily—*e.g.*, when he gave his support, though not in any active manner, to Disestablishment of the Church in Wales. In 1895, again, there was a brisk dispute over the vacancy at Leamington, created by the retirement of Speaker Peel from the House of Commons. The right of contesting the succession was promptly claimed by the Liberal Unionists, on the ground that Mr. Peel had belonged to their Party. But it was shown that he had never severed—indeed, he had maintained by subscriptions—his connection with the local Gladstonian organisation, and the Conservatives, who had a local candidate in the field, and possessed nearly all the voting weight in the Constituency, argued that they were entitled to treat it as an open seat.

Equitably, their position was unassailable. The Liberal Unionist contention as to the politics of the late Speaker was by no means established, and under these circumstances, especially as the Conservative representative had been at work for some time and was generally acceptable to the electors, it was felt that the appeal to the Unionist Compact was to interpret the letter rather than the spirit of that arrangement. So much soreness was caused that a compromise had to be arranged. The Conservatives consented to give up the seat to the Liberal Unionists, but only on condition that the candidate put forward by their allies should be withdrawn in favour of one whose views were but nominally distinguished from their own.

It would have been the height of folly if either of these grounds of controversy had been allowed to break up the union between the Conservative and Radical Unionists. It would have been impossible for Mr. Chamberlain to abandon, or even to sink, his opinions with regard to Disestablishment, and, if he had been unconciliatory in regard to Leamington, it must be remembered that the Constituency lay almost within that Midland region which was the stronghold of his political power, and also that the Liberal Unionists, having suffered so heavily at the General Election, could not well afford to have their list of members diminished.

So far as Mr. Chamberlain found himself compelled to advocate, or not to oppose, measures introduced by the Gladstonians, it was admitted by the Conservatives that he did what he believed to be his duty in the manner least injurious to his allies. In February 1893, Mr. Asquith brought in his Bill for suspending the creation of new clerical interests with regard to the Church of England in Wales and Monmouthshire. This was an avowed preparation for a future Disestablishment Bill, but Mr. Chamberlain and fifteen other Liberal Unionists abstained from voting in favour of a Measure which, under other circumstances, they must have supported. He went even further, and in the House of Commons remarked on what he considered the insincerity of Ministers in proposing it. In a general denunciation of "political log-rolling," there was, he said, no genuine majority for any one item in the Government programme. The Welsh voted for Home Rule because they wanted Disestablishment; the Teetotallers for Disestablishment, because they wanted Local Veto; and the Labour Party for everything, because they wanted the Eight Hours Day. Again, on the Employers' Liability Bill, to the main principles of which he was deeply committed, he gave a cordial support to the Amendment, introduced by Lord Dudley, which preserved to men and masters

the liberty of contracting themselves out of the new law in the case of existing voluntary arrangements that provided both parties with a more advantageous manner of settling claims for injury or death.

This Mr. Chamberlain did at the risk of giving offence to the Trade Unions, whose Leaders strongly opposed the modification demanded, and in the main carried, by the House of Lords. Indeed, he pointed out that the Bill, as proposed by the Government, did both less and more than it ought to do. It would not materially reduce the number of accidents because every prudent employer would at once insure himself against the claims that might be made against him. Though the Bill would provide compensation in a number of cases not covered by the existing law, the Government might have given it a much more general scope, and included practically all cases of accident. This could have been done by the establishment and development of voluntary institutions for providing compensation, and it was in this direction that public opinion was tending. Under these circumstances it was a "strong order" to destroy the existing institutions of this character, and to discourage them in the future. No answer had been given to the demand of "hundreds of thousands of working men who simply wanted to be left alone." It was said they had been coerced into making this demand. It was a libel on "the very flower of the working classes." In fact, the pressure had been exercised in the other direction.

It would be tedious to trace the minute and somewhat futile discussions in the House of Commons, and its dispute with the Peers, on some of the Clauses in the Parish Councils Bill. At the time these points were considered sufficiently serious, since it was hoped by the Liberals and feared by the Conservatives that this latest extension of Local Government would revolutionise village life and dethrone "the Squire and the Parson," from their traditional influence. In a few parishes it has, no doubt,



had that result, but in the vast majority of cases the new representative machinery has, practically, been administered by the same persons who had previously made themselves active in rural business. On this question Mr. Chamberlain's attitude was rather that of a moderator than a combatant, and, if in the various recommendations which he pressed on his allies he was inclined to favour concessions to the Government, there was no case, in which he could be charged with breaking loose from the Conservatives. Certainly he got no thanks from the other side for what he did.

Again, on the question of Betterment, Mr. Chamberlain appeared once more in his new character of mediator, and risked a quarrel with his Progressive supporters. An Improvements Bill, promoted by the London County Council, had contained a Clause giving effect to the principle that the persons whose property would be rendered more valuable by the proposed constructions should be forced to contribute towards the expense. The proposal had been struck out by the Peers as invoking a novel doctrine which should not be sanctioned except as part of a general policy deliberately adopted. This Amendment the Commons declined to accept, and at this point the whole Bill was hung up. In order to reach an amicable arrangement, or at least a definite understanding, it was moved in the House of Lords, and carried, that the House of Commons should be invited to join in the appointment of a Select Committee to report on the whole subject.

This offer was declined by the Prime Minister, though Mr. Chamberlain, and several other Liberal Unionist members, urged that the offer had been made by the Peers in good faith. It would enable them to retrieve what he regarded as their errors. Why should Ministers refuse them a *locus pœnitentiæ*. But the policy of conciliation was exactly what Mr. Gladstone's supporters were unwilling that he should adopt. They were eager to make the

Peers "fill up the cup." The more disagreements between Lords and Commons, the better for the General Election. The eventual failure of these tactics does not prove that any more sagacious course was then open to the Liberal Party. That the policy was regarded with some apprehension by the other side was shown by the efforts made by the leading Unionists, and especially by Mr. Chamberlain, to reduce the occasions of conflict between the two Houses of Parliament. But, whether prudent or imprudent, the policy had one immediate drawback—it involved the loss of all the important Government Bills. Though the Session had opened in January 1893, it dragged along over Christmas, and was not wound up till March 1894. The Employers' Liability Bill had to be withdrawn, and the Parish Councils Act was only passed in a somewhat mutilated condition. Nothing else of consequence had been accomplished.

But this was not the greatest of the misfortunes that fell upon the Liberal Party. It had long been evident that Mr. Gladstone had neither the health nor the spirit required for the contentious tasks on which he had entered. The rumour of his approaching resignation published by the *Pall Mall Gazette* on 31st January had been officially contradicted. It was, however, only premature and unauthorised. It proved to be correct. His last speech in the House of Commons was delivered on 1st March 1894, when he announced that, rather than wreck the whole work of the Session, the Government would withdraw their opposition to the Amendments finally proposed by the Lords to the Parish Councils Bill. This he accompanied with a "sorrowful declaration" that the recent differences between the two Houses—not merely on that Bill—had been of no casual or temporary nature. They were differences of conviction, of prepossession, of mental habit, and fundamental tendency. The developments of that year had led to a state of things which could not long continue. The issue between the two Houses had long

been postponed—partly through the discretion, circumspection, and reserve which had been shown by the Peers, in the days of the Duke of Wellington, Lord Aberdeen, and others, in the exercise of their “enormous privileges.” But Mr. Gladstone feared that the spirit of reserve and circumspection had gone by. The House of Commons could not be a judge in its own case. The appeal must be to a higher authority. The time at which the judgment of the nation should be invited was for the Executive Government to decide. “My duty terminates,” he said, “by calling the attention of the House to the fact, which it is really impossible to set aside, that in considering these Amendments, limited as their scope may seem to some to be, we are considering a part, an essential part, of a question enormously large, a question which has become profoundly acute, which will demand a settlement, and must receive at an early date that settlement from the highest authority.”

The dignified language of this unspoken farewell from the aged Statesman to the Assembly in which, for two generations, he had been incomparably the greatest figure, which he could still dominate when he chose to strain his failing powers, was the more pathetic because he had already placed his resignation in the hands of his Sovereign, and because this, his last, utterance from his place in Parliament marked his loyal adherence to a policy which he could not carry on, and which had been adopted, if not against his will, yet without his hearty concurrence. He had never gone cheerfully into a campaign against the House of Lords, and he now gave his consent to it chiefly because he felt that the question was less for himself than his colleagues.

By an arrangement rapidly carried out, which need not be examined here, the succession was given to Lord Rosebery, and a new split was made in the already riven body of the Liberal Party—between the advocates of Home Rule who put that Measure last in their list and those who insisted on keeping it in the first place.

Meantime, the Unionists had been closing up their ranks. It was something more than an act of political courtesy, it was a symptom of the approaching Coalition, that Mr. Chamberlain had been invited to become the guest of a Conservative Club in Birmingham. The day before he took part in this significant ceremony he delivered a rattling attack on the Government, and scornfully repudiated the claims of the Liberal Party to be considered the real authors of the Free Education policy—Mr. Gladstone had never supported the Birmingham League, and the Act of 1870 had been passed by his Ministry in defiance of that body. Even in 1885 he had spoken of the remission of school fees as remote from practical politics. How, then, could his Party claim credit for a Measure which was proposed and carried a few years later by his adversaries? The blame for this last barren Session lay with Ministers themselves, who had won the support of the electors by lavish promises of British reforms, all of which had been postponed for a scheme of Home Rule. All they had done was to set up a feeble agitation against the Peers, and to issue a Circular which excited nothing but ridicule.

Thus, to all intents and purposes, though not in express terms, Mr. Chamberlain had entered into partnership with the Conservatives. He associated them with the Radical Unionists in the credit gained by the Free Education Act, and joined them in defence of the House of Lords. It was an auspicious prelude to his declaration of political faith at Edgbaston. The assembled Conservatives of his own city, against whom he had fought so many stiff battles, were informed that, in his belief, the combination of the various Unionist groups was not a mere temporary arrangement. He looked to the creation of a new National Party above all sectional aims—to preserve the welfare, even the safety, of the United Kingdom. It should be “sensible of the responsibilities of Empire, mindful of the traditions of a great governing race, and determined to hand down to

future generations the great inheritance of a world-wide dominion."

These words, spoken on 30th January 1894, are a sufficient answer to critics who suggest that Mr. Chamberlain's Imperialism was suddenly adopted when he found himself at the Colonial Office in 1895, and only then adopted because it gave him a chance of making a figure in that Department. As a matter of fact, it had for some years past been the post on which he had set his political ambition. When there was some talk, though perhaps never any definite intention, in 1887, of replacing the Conservative Ministry with a Unionist Coalition, it was the office of Colonial Secretary that Mr. Chamberlain would then have been ready to accept—which, indeed, he preferred to any other that was available. The belief in our Imperial destinies, to which he has frequently, in recent years, given eloquent and precise expression, was no new growth in his mind. He had begun his political life with some rudiments of that faith, and, if they had been obscured by his association from 1880 to 1885 with Statesmen who cared so much for internal affairs that they almost ignored our interests in other Continents, the instinct had never been quite suppressed. It was roughly awakened by the threatened dismemberment of the United Kingdom; stimulated by co-operation with a Party which thought too much, rather than too little, of our rights and duties outside these Islands; and it has been confirmed by a close acquaintance with the magnitude and complexity of the problems that confront a State which has to conduct the hegemony of a loosely-compacted confederation of races who present, in their various stages of development, a continuous History of Civilisation—from almost primitive barbarism to the very verge of democratic extravagance.

In addressing the practical politicians of the Edgbaston Junior Conservative Club, Mr. Chamberlain was not content to sketch the outline of that new Party which he asked them to discern in the future. The promise of a rich ban-

quiet at some distant date will not satisfy present hunger. The appetite of the day was best satisfied by solid invective against the other side. Mr. Chamberlain provided it with all the air of a cheerful giver. He began by pointing to the gulf that parted him from his old associates. But it was they, not he, who had abandoned their common principles. "The New Radicals," he said, "are never satisfied with making anybody happy unless they can make somebody else unhappy. Their love for Home Rule is only surpassed by their hatred of the Protestant and British minority in Ulster. Their interest in Temperance is conditional on their being able to ruin the publicans. Their advocacy of Compensation for workmen is tempered by their desire to do some injury to the employer. Even their love, their affection, for Parish Councils is conditional on their hostility to the Church."

This utterance sensibly cleared the air. Conservatives could no longer feel distrust of an ally who had made this fierce onslaught on the enemy. There could be no more talk of forgetting and forgiving between Gladstonians and Radical Unionists. The quarrel was no longer confined to the Irish Question—it included the whole policy of the Ministerialist Party. Nothing, therefore, that was likely to happen within the next few years—as long a period as practical politicians can consider—could modify the position. It was not altered by the retirement of Mr. Gladstone, or by the vacillating professions made by his successor on the subject of Home Rule. At the meeting of the Liberal Party on 12th March, Lord Rosebery said there was no need for a declaration of policy on his part. "We stand where we did. There is no change of measures—only a most disastrous change in men." As to the steadiness of the Cabinet on the Irish Question, it was a sufficient pledge that Mr. John Morley not only remained a member, but also refused a higher office than that of Chief Secretary, because he would not sever his career from the cause of Ireland. But only a few hours inter-

Rosebery's Edinburgh declaration. "We have a Prime Minister," he said, "who is willing to support Home Rule though he has no belief in its early success. He is willing to disestablish one Church, or to establish three, as may be most convenient. He is willing to abolish the House of Lords, even at the cost of Revolution, though he believes in a Second Chamber. There is no change, then, in policy. But there is a change. There is a change in the attitude of the Prime Minister. In Mr. Gladstone we had, at any rate, a man who succeeded in convincing himself the more he tried to convince others. But Lord Rosebery is not convinced, and he does not seem to think that anyone needs conviction." This attack on the new Prime Minister was the more significant because, personally, it was unprovoked. It showed that any hopes of a Liberal Reunion which had been based on the change of Premiership were quite unfounded—that the Radical Unionists would be as firm against a Prime Minister who was lukewarm on Home Rule as against his enthusiastic predecessor.

Nor was this inference weakened by the confessedly awkward position in which Mr. Chamberlain was placed when Mr. Asquith's Bill was introduced (26th April) for the Disestablishment of the Church in the twelve Welsh counties and in Monmouthshire. He could not honestly oppose this Measure, yet politically, in view of the issues involved, which were far greater than any contained in the scheme itself, it was inexpedient to support Ministers. But for any inconvenience which he felt on this question he found compensation in the Registration Bill which adopted the principle of "One-man One-vote" without satisfying the other catch-cry of "One-vote One-value." Though the state of the Register was a scandal which it was the duty of the Government to deal with, this scheme "raised the manipulation of Elections into a fine art." By abolishing the rate-paying qualification Ministers "favoured the wastrel, the ne'er-do-well, the profligate,

and the drunkard." No attempt was made to redress the over-representation of Ireland—that would have been for the Government to commit political suicide. In fact, it was a purely partisan measure, and an attempt to pack the National Jury.

Mr. Chamberlain's recent invasion of Edinburgh and attack upon the Prime Minister were warmly resented. On May 23rd Lord Rosebery retaliated by a political visit to Birmingham, the headquarters of Radical Unionism. On the five leading questions of the day—on the Church, the House of Lords, the Budget, the Registration Bill, and Local Veto—he charged Mr. Chamberlain with inconsistency. In fact, his Liberalism was rapidly vanishing. A few days later, at Bradford, Mr. Chamberlain replied by pointing out that the most important charges which Lord Rosebery had made were based on quotations from "The Radical Programme," a book to which he had contributed nothing but the Preface, while he had expressly disclaimed responsibility for the views which it put forward. It was true, of course, that he had attacked the House of Lords: and it might happen in the future that he would again contest the right of an hereditary Chamber to resist the declared will of the great majority of the people. At present, however, the Peers were, he thought, defending the rights of the majority.

More interesting was his appearance at Liverpool in the Autumn (5th September) when he laboured to show that there was nothing incompatible between Conservatism and his own type of Radicalism. Both schools of thought might consistently co-operate for social reform. Here he ventured on the delicate topic of making provision for the claims of the aged and deserving poor. He was on safer ground when he advanced the argument which lies at the root of Democratic Imperialism in this country—that the population of these small islands cannot subsist in their present comfort and prosperity except by maintaining the power of the Empire. For this reason it was necessary



for the working classes to feel an active interest in foreign questions. From the Liberal Party, as then constituted, there was nothing they could look for. Later in the month Mr. Chamberlain delivered a series of speeches at Leeds, by way of counterblast to the recent proceedings of the National Liberal Federation in that City, and the Manifesto issued against the House of Lords. He began by insisting on the familiar theme that Home Rule was unpopular in England, and could only be carried by the Government if they made an appeal to the country on a number of false issues, raised merely to divert public attention from the real object. Social reform would have to go to the wall because it offered no opportunity for picking a fresh quarrel with the Peers.

As for the Leeds Manifesto, Mr. Chamberlain argued that some Second Chamber was necessary. If the Lords were deprived of their suspensive Veto the country would lie at the mercy of a chance majority in the Commons—not, perhaps, a British majority! Was the balance of power to lie in the hands of men whose character and proceedings were alien to the British spirit, who were subsidised with foreign gold, and might be nominated by a foreign organisation? Contrasting the Old Radicalism with the New, he declared that the object of the former had been to raise and emancipate the individual; the latter aimed at bringing about a dead level of uniformity, in which the idle, thriftless, and improvident would be treated alike with the honest, industrious, and capable. No Conservative could have been more direct than was Mr. Chamberlain in denouncing the mischief of Collectivism. It meant, he said, Confiscation—neither the capital of the rich nor the savings of the poor would be spared. He did not believe, however, that the bulk of the working classes favoured the doctrines of the New Trade Unionism. But the Unionists, if they would combat revolutionary and impracticable schemes, must be prepared with an alternative policy—a policy of that social reform which

had been so completely neglected by the present Parliament.

What the articles in that Programme were to be, he afterwards explained at West Birmingham. He had opposed the Local Veto Bill, but admitted that Temperance legislation was required. What he still advocated was an adaptation of the Gothenburg system—which took the trade into Municipal hands, and thus removed the inducements either for pressing the traffic or supplying bad liquor. But it was an essential part of his scheme that the licensed victualler should receive fair compensation.

Another proposal was a considerable extension of the Artisans' Dwellings Act. In theory he had been disposed to favour the Betterment scheme adopted by the London County Council, but in practice the difficulty of working it equitably had proved almost insuperable. It would be found more useful to enable the Local Authority to acquire, at a reasonable price, a portion of the ground surrounding the insanitary area which was to be reconstructed. The enhanced value of the whole site would thus become public property. The same result would be achieved as by laying a Betterment charge on individuals while no person would have any reason for complaint.

Workmen should be assisted by loans on easy terms to purchase their dwelling-houses. The repayment might be spread over a term of years, and the State might make a slight profit in the transaction.

With regard to Old Age Pensions, he protested against the recognition of any universal claim. Only those persons should be helped who were willing to help themselves. He expressly repudiated the demand of the National Old Age Pensions League—that so much a week should be paid to every person over sixty years of age who applied for it, the money being taken from other Charities and from the Church of England. To begin with, the funds suggested would be quite inadequate. In the second place, the proposal was made by persons more anxious

to disestablish the Church than to set up Old Age Pensions. It was dishonest to put forward a branch of the Liberation Society as though it were an Old Age Pension League—it was drawing the trail of a red-herring across the path.

Arbitration in Trade disputes might be provided by means of a Tribunal in every district, and consisting of a Judge with Assessors specially appointed in each case. Though the decisions of such a Court would have no legal force they would have great moral influence—no Strike was ever successful unless it were backed up by public opinion. Mr. Chamberlain did not countenance the idea of a Universal and Compulsory Eight Hours Day, but there might be a system of Local Option with regard to Mines, and the hours of shopkeepers and their assistants might be reduced in the same way. As to Employers' Liability he favoured an arrangement by which compensation should be secured, without expense or litigation, for all kinds of injuries. Finally, he was prepared to restrict the immigration of Pauper Aliens.

At Durham a little later (16th October), he defined more precisely his position with regard to the Church of England. He should vote for Mr. Asquith's Bill for Welsh Disestablishment, though he disliked the spirit in which the "principle of Voluntaryism" was being carried into effect. The question should have been approached in Wales as it had been in Ireland—as one of national and religious importance, not as one of jealousy and competing sects. If the Church in Wales were to be disestablished he would claim that the terms accorded to it should not be less generous than those granted to the Church of Ireland.

After this promise it was clear that the Conservatives would have no solid reason to complain of the abstract support which he might give to a Bill that could by no human possibility pass into law. They were delighted, and a little surprised, by his declaration about the House of Lords. He was, he said, no defender of an hereditary

legislature. But he was a strong upholder of a Second Chamber. Until a better could be found, he should "stick to the House of Lords." On the one hand, it was not strong enough to resist the clearly expressed will of the people: on the other, it could "secure a period of delay, and consideration, discussion, and an appeal to the country." And an appeal to the country! This was not in so many words an admission of the Peers' claim to force a Dissolution of Parliament. Indeed, no such claim had ever been asserted by any judicious supporter of the House of Lords, though the pretension had often been imputed to the Peers—by Mr. Chamberlain himself, as well as by other Radicals. But his words on this occasion carry a clear admission that in his opinion the House of Lords would be entitled, on any great question of the day, to insist on the Bill which they had rejected either being dropped or submitted as the test question at a General Election.

On 22nd November, Mr. Chamberlain summed up, at Heywood, the case for the Unionists against the Government. "You may, if you like, try to disestablish and disendow the Church in Wales; and, if you succeed, in my opinion—though I sympathise with the object as a matter of abstract principle—nobody will be one penny the better for it. You may, as I have said, try to disestablish the Welsh Church, or, you may, on the other hand, try to become the owners of your own lands. You may attempt to pass an Irish Land Bill, or you may attempt to get Old Age Pensions for yourselves. You may try to put down drinking, to prevent any man getting a glass of beer; or you may try, with me, to prevent drunkenness and to restrict the vice of drinking. Lastly, you may enter into a campaign against the House of Lords which will last, as Lord Rosebery himself has warned you, for years, and, it may be, for generations; or you may prefer what I believe to be the wiser course, you may enter on a campaign against want and misery, and you may try to add some-

thing to the sum of human happiness. You cannot have both these policies at the same time."

It was universally believed at the end of 1894 that an appeal to the country would be made in the following year. By-elections had not been favourable to the Government, and in the House of Commons their majority was notoriously unsteady. When Parliament met on 5th February the chief Measures mentioned in the Queen's Speech related to Irish Land, the restoration of Evicted Tenants, Welsh Disestablishment, Local Veto, Plural Voting, and Trade Conciliation. The length of the list was its sufficient condemnation, and this was, in effect, what Mr. Chamberlain declared in his Amendment to the Address. The primary policy of the Government, he said, was to pass a Home Rule Bill for Ireland. This had been admitted in the speeches of Sir William Harcourt and Mr. John Morley. But in that policy they were out of harmony with the opinion of the country. Indeed, if they did not know this to be the case, they would have dissolved Parliament when the Peers rejected Mr. Gladstone's Bill in 1893. If they had done so, and if the country had supported them, the House of Lords would have given way. But on their own confession "the predominant partner" was against them. As had been said of a previous Administration, though they had forgotten how to govern they had not learned how to resign. To cover their failure, they raised the good old cry "Down with the House of Lords!" They had brought out this favourite piece which had never failed to draw, but on this occasion it had not "taken." Why? Because it had never before been mounted with such shabby accessories and acted by so weak a company. The secondary policy of Ministers having fared no better than the primary, they were now engaged in the tertiary policy of "filling up the cup." They were bringing in a number of Measures, not intended to pass, in the hope that one amongst them would help them to pick a plausible quarrel with the Peers. An attempt had been made to damage

himself by the publication of a private letter.<sup>1</sup> He was prepared to stand by what he had written on the subject of Disestablishment. But he had expressed only his personal opinions—so far as he knew, they were not shared by any other member of the Unionist Party.

When the Division was taken on Mr. Chamberlain's Amendment the majority for Ministers was only 14 (297 against 283), the followers of Mr. Redmond having voted with the Opposition. Evidently, as Mr. Chamberlain had declared, "the Government were tottering." It would have been no surprise if they had made up their minds at once to take the "inevitable plunge." They decided, however, to stay on until they should be defeated in the House of Commons, and, as things turned out, they had some justification for hoping to get safely through the Session. On the Welsh Disestablishment Bill they obtained a majority of 44 for the Second Reading. Their Irish Land Bill reached the same stage without a Division being challenged, though not without an interesting Debate. After a sharp passage of arms with Mr. Dillon (whose conciliatory language in the House Mr. Chamberlain contrasted with his advice to the Irish tenants) he declared that he had himself long been in favour of transferring the ownership from the landlord to the cultivator. This he had learned from Mr. Bright and it had been confirmed by Mr. Parnell. The Bill of 1881 had only been a temporary Measure, but all the safeguards it created would be destroyed by this new proposal. The value of land would not be diminished but destroyed. The one true solution of the

<sup>1</sup> "Disestablishment in Wales must come," he observed, "and the only question is whether it shall be accompanied by a just treatment of the Church in regard to its funds. This can be secured now by the Unionist Party, and Churchmen would be wise if they were to urge their leaders to devote themselves to this part of the subject. If, on the contrary, they meet the present agitation with an absolute *non possumus*, they may probably find that when it is next brought forward, the opportunity of a compromise will have been lost. The Welsh Church is entitled to liberal, and even generous, terms; and if, under these circumstances, it is freed from the connection with the State, it will, in Mr. Chamberlain's belief, rise to a position of influence and usefulness that it has never yet enjoyed."—*Aberystwith Observer*.

agrarian question was Land Purchase, and this would be impeded rather than assisted by the Bill. The Government were introducing uncertainty over matters which had been settled. The Irish tenant was too shrewd to go into court to buy his holding so long as this uncertainty existed. Nevertheless, the Bill had good points, and he should support it if Ministers would accept reasonable Amendments in Committee.

In London politics, apart from his abstract leaning to the Betterment principle, Mr. Chamberlain has given his support to the Moderates, who, for all practical purposes, are identical with the Conservatives. He never was enamoured of the Municipal system as it is worked in most, though not all, the great cities in the United States, and the closer acquaintance which he has gained by his visits to that country convinced him that the English boroughs are more efficiently and much more cheaply administered. Here there is no corruption—or none of which serious account need be taken—and the expenditure, in proportion to the population, he estimates at one-fifth, or at most one-fourth, of the cost in America. He has laid down, as essential conditions of Municipal efficiency, first, that the permanent officials shall be so well remunerated as not to be exposed to the temptation of indirect profits, and that men should be obtained for the public service as well qualified as those employed by the best private firms; and, secondly, that the Constituency shall not be too large for the member to be in reasonably close touch with the electors. The former condition had been almost ignored by the Progressive majority in the London County Council, though recently there has been an improvement in this respect. The second condition was rendered impossible by the constitution of the Council itself; the fault lies with Parliament, or rather with the Conservative Government in 1888. "A population of 500,000," Mr. Chamberlain has written, "is practically the largest number that can be governed from one centre

with the individual attention and constant assiduity that have contributed so much to the usefulness and popularity of corporate work. Many observers, friendly to the work and careful of the reputation of the London County Council, regret that the establishment of a central authority did not follow, rather than precede, the creation of Local Councils dealing with more moderate areas, and fear that the possible outcome may be, when the first flush of public interest has passed away, the permanent institution of a great centralised bureaucratic administration, jealous of its authority, wedded to its own methods, and gradually losing touch with the people for whose benefit it exists. Decentralisation is one of the secrets of successful Local Government, and it is an empty name in connection with a Local Authority which professes to look after the health, the comfort, and the domestic arrangements of nearly 5,000,000 of people."

In this Article, published in the *Nineteenth Century*, Mr. Chamberlain clearly foreshadowed the creation of the new London Boroughs which was to be carried out by the future Unionist Government. Though he does not appear to have made any express declaration as to the absorption, once proposed by London Radicals, of the City within the Administrative County of London, such a scheme would have been quite alien to the principle of decentralisation by which he sets, perhaps, an excessive store. On 6th February 1895, he defined his position with regard to London politics, in a speech delivered in Stepney, in view of the approaching General Election for the County Council. He denounced the idea of setting up a great central body which would take all the credit over and above a number of Local Boards which were to do all the drudgery—a great Municipal planet at Spring Gardens with several little satellites revolving round it, and shining with a pale and reflected light.

The two great questions of local life in London were, he said, the Housing of the Poor and the treatment of the



Unemployed. The solution of both lay in the reconstruction of insanitary areas. But the London County Council had done little in this direction, because the Progressives would not accept a form of Betterment which had satisfied the Manchester Corporation. The proposal to establish Municipal workshops he would not countenance—it must lead to jobbery. Had the Council done for their *employes* more than an honourable and just private employer would have done? An incautious enthusiast cried out “Yes!” That, retorted Mr. Chamberlain, was a charge of bribery and corruption! But he did not make it, did not believe it. If, however, the Council had done no more than a fair private employer would do, what on earth had they to boast about? They were a public body, trusted with public money, and they had no right to be “generous” at the expense of their constituents. That was the beginning of the “Tammany Hall” *régime*, under which public officials were paid extravagant salaries, and rendered political services in return. “We are not going to descend to that level in England,” he said. Not many of Mr. Chamberlain’s speeches have provoked more adverse comment from his opponents. Here, they said, was the Leader of “Municipal Socialism” in Birmingham turning his back on the creed that gave him his first promotion in public life! The reply was that the distinction which he drew between the cases of London and Birmingham was based upon the difference of size between the two places—the one was within, the other was without, the limits of efficient self-administration.

Reference has already been made to the Leamington incident and Mr. Chamberlain’s attitude with regard to the Welsh Church. These matters had caused just enough dissatisfaction among a group of the Conservatives for the Liberals to suggest that a quarrel had broken out between the Unionist Parties. It was thought advisable, therefore, to dispose of this exaggeration. Speaking to the Primrose League (26th April), Mr. Balfour declared

that it was not worth while to repudiate the statement that personal differences had arisen between himself and Mr. Chamberlain. Never had a man received more generous support, he declared, than he had received from the Leader of the Liberal Unionist Party in the House of Commons. Never had their friendship been more cordial than at that moment. The attacks on Mr. Chamberlain had only proceeded from a fraction of the Conservative Party. The Compacts of 1886 and 1888 were artificial and temporary arrangements — necessary for a period of transition. That period would soon pass away, and be followed, he hoped, by a fusion of the two Unionist Parties. He afterwards read a letter from Lord Salisbury. It was untrue that the Conservatives, so their Leader wrote, were no longer sensible of the services rendered to the common cause by the Liberal Unionists, and especially by Mr. Chamberlain. They had always recognised “most gratefully” the “disinterested and straightforward loyalty with which Mr. Chamberlain had devoted his great authority and his splendid powers” to the defence of the Union. Lord Salisbury felt sure that members of the Primrose League would let it be seen that the bonds which held the Unionist Party together were not weakened, and that their combined efforts would not be relaxed.

At St. James's Hall (22nd May) Mr. Chamberlain made a suitable reply. It had been feared at one time, he said, that by joining forces with the Conservative Party the Liberal Unionists would retard the progress of Reform. Had this apprehension been fulfilled, the sacrifice would have been justified. It would have been better to give up Reform for a time—until the enemy had been driven outside the gates. Happily, however, the Liberal Unionists found that they were not lending any support to Reaction. The Measures passed by the Conservatives in 1886–1892, with the “help of the Liberal Unionists,” compared favourably, in their material results, with those

of any previous Administration. The friendliness and loyalty of the Conservative Leaders had been beyond question. The alliance was destined to last and bear rich fruit. To this general profession he gave a special point, by making an announcement which went to the heart of the Conservative County Members — amongst whom were found the chief murmurers against his recent actions. He promised his concurrence in a scheme for reducing the burdens on land. Something beyond bare sympathy was due to the depressed agricultural industry. It might be found possible to relieve the farmers of part of the excessive rates which they were then paying, and something might be done to attach the labourer to the soil, and counteract the attractions of the towns.

This was definite and satisfactory, the County Tories thought, and the passing cloud was quickly cleared away. The two Parties worked together with a will, as though the Government had already been beaten, and Parliament dissolved. Still, however, Ministers succeeded, thanks to the excellent services of their Whips, in staving off the evil day. Looking at the question from the other point of view, Mr. Chamberlain, somewhat brutally, compared them with the condemned criminal who was not in great haste that the show should begin, and who

“ Now fitted the halter, now traversed the cart,  
And often took leave, but was loth to depart.”

This speech was made on 28th May, but it was not till 21st June that the bolt fell. The adverse vote on the Army Estimates — brought about by what the Liberals called a dirty trick, and the Unionists applauded as a smart manœuvre — might have been reversed by a strong or sanguine Administration. Indeed, some supporters of the Government advised them to take that course and carry on public business to the normal end of the Session. The decision to resign office was, however, rendered necessary by the attitude of the Minister for War, who



### THE LOBBY OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS DURING THE CRISIS OF 1895

The fall of the Liberal Ministry of 1892-95 was brought about by a rather trivial incident. In committee on the Army Estimates on June 21, 1895, Mr. Brodrick moved the reduction of the salary of Mr. (now Sir) Henry Campbell-Bannerman, Secretary for War, by £100, on the ground that the supply and reserve of small-arms ammunition was insufficient. He was supported by Mr. Balfour and Mr. Chamberlain, and on a Division his Motion was carried by a majority of seven. Mr. Campbell-Bannerman insisted on resigning, and the whole ministry resigned with him. Mr. Morley tells us that Mr. Gladstone regarded the action of the Government as pusillanimous, and would not listen to any attempt to justify it. Mr. Bannerman contended that he had provided more ammunition than his military advisers thought necessary, and regarded the defeat as a formal Vote of No Confidence.



*From a drawing by S. BEGG.*

THE LOBBY OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS



flatly refused to remain at his post, and his retirement would have involved a general reconstruction of the Cabinet. This was an operation too dangerous to be undertaken by a Prime Minister with a small and precarious majority. On 24th June, the Queen sent for Lord Salisbury, whom she commanded to form a new Administration.



## CHAPTER XII

### THE UNIONIST ADMINISTRATION, 1895-1900

On receiving the Queen's summons, Lord Salisbury held a brief consultation with the Duke of Devonshire and Mr. Chamberlain, as well as with some of his old Conservative colleagues. At first he was disposed to stipulate, as in 1885, that the outgoing Government should promise to co-operate in winding-up the business of the Session. Meantime, however, the ground had been cut away under his feet by Ministers in both Houses having announced their resignation. It was necessary, therefore, that Lord Salisbury should accept the succession without delay, nor was it less inevitable to invite the Liberal Unionists to share the responsibility. It had been on this understanding that the New Prime Minister went down to Windsor, and after his second journey on the following day it was made known that the chief Offices of State had been filled. With the duties of Prime Minister Lord Salisbury combined those of Foreign Secretary; the Duke of Devonshire became Lord President of the Council; Mr. Balfour, First Lord of the Treasury and Leader of the House of Commons; the Chancellorship of the Exchequer was given to Sir Michael Hicks-Beach. Mr. Goschen was made First Lord of the Admiralty, and Mr. Chamberlain went to the Colonial Office.

The difficulty of allocating these Departments had been modified by two paramount considerations. In the first place, there could be no doubt that the new Leader of the House of Commons must be Mr. Balfour. His

claim could not be, and in fact was not, disputed. No other man would have been accepted by the Conservatives, nor did Mr. Chamberlain ask for or desire that position. Had he asked for the Chancellorship of the Exchequer his personal services to the Unionist cause would have entitled him to the second place, in point of dignity, in the House of Commons; but to elevate him, as it were, over the head of Mr. Goschen might have seemed like putting a slight on the very able and unselfish Statesman who in 1887 had helped Lord Salisbury out of what seemed an awkward position. So far as capacity was in question, either Mr. Goschen or Mr. Chamberlain was, by general consent, admirably competent for control of the national finances, but Mr. Goschen declined the post when it was offered him, and it was decided to confer it upon a Conservative politician who, in spite of his considerable attainments, could not be regarded as a rival of either of those to whom he had been preferred. At the Admiralty Mr. Goschen was well suited, and there was no Department so acceptable to Mr. Chamberlain as the Colonial Office. It was, as we have seen, the one to which he had been destined eight years before, in what then seemed the possible event of a Ministerial reconstruction, and many of his recent utterances in Opposition suggested that he had already discerned, and was anxious to obtain, in the administration of Imperial business, an opening for constructive Statesmanship.

To the public, however, the appointment was something of a surprise. The office had generally been held by second-rate men or by those whose star was on the decline. It was suggested by candid friends in the Liberal Party that he had been sent to the Colonial Office in order that he might be kept too hard at Departmental work for taking any active part in Cabinet business, or for making speeches up and down the country. But, whatever may have been the opinion of outsiders, neither then nor afterwards, neither in public nor private, did

Mr. Chamberlain express dissatisfaction. Now it is one of his faults, or merits, that he cannot long suppress his feelings. If he had cherished any resentment, it was bound, sooner or later, to come out—and come out in the most unmistakable manner. Had he thought in June 1895 that his merits had been insufficiently recognised, he would have considered that the discredit lay, not with himself, but with the Prime Minister, and he would have felt no scruple about placing the blame on the proper shoulders. The politician for whom an adversary has invented the word “pushful” would not have quietly acquiesced, when he was in a position to make his own terms, in what he regarded as derogatory treatment.

The truth was that the new Colonial Secretary had realised that, for the present at least, Home politics were practically played out. The Constitutional reforms which he had once advocated he could no longer take any active part in promoting, except at a sacrifice of principle which he was not prepared even to contemplate. For a Radical who would not accept Home Rule there was no longer any place in the Liberal Party. In an attack on certain ancient institutions which in Mr. Chamberlain's eyes were either useless or harmful he could find no partners except among those who had become his irreconcilable enemies. In the tasks of constructive Statesmanship, on the other hand, the Conservatives would, he believed, be more useful and more docile associates, and as Lord Salisbury's official colleague he might hope to make an even better record than he had achieved as an irresponsible adviser. But neither the Home Office nor the Exchequer—certainly none of the other Departments—offered so much scope for individual energy as the one which he had chosen.

By training and association, if not by deliberate intellectual choice, he had always been a strong supporter of Free Trade, and on many occasions he had denounced the fallacies of the Protectionism that prevailed sixty years ago. He had never wavered in his support of the

doctrine which Cobden and Bright and Charles Villiers incorporated into our fiscal system. But he has not been willing to keep his eyes closed to the changes which have recently occurred in the economical position of the country. Little by little, we are being edged out of foreign markets, until at the present time there are few—except in those Dependencies to which we have not yet accorded Self-Government—where we can do business except at a greater or less disadvantage. This is a tendency of which Statesmanship is bound to take serious account. Mr. Chamberlain's views on Preferential Trade with the Colonies, and his less definite aspirations after an Imperial Zollverein, will be described in a later Chapter. It might not be difficult to quote passages from his speeches which would suggest that the opinions he has since expressed had long existed, though in a latent form, within his mind. At present, however, they had not been developed. They were the outcome of subsequent and unforeseen events.

In 1895, certainly, they had not taken definite shape. Then, as now, the volume of our Trade outside the Empire was so vastly in excess of the transactions between Mother Country and Colonies that no consideration of Imperial sentiment could be allowed to turn the scale. But already the area of our commercial liberty was being seriously diminished. The M'Kinley Tariff was aimed by the United States more directly against this than any other European country, while the rigid Treaties of Commerce between the various central Powers of the Continent were scarcely less hostile than the fiscal legislation of the French Republic. Our Foreign Trade—part even of our Colonial Trade—was existing merely on sufferance, a sufferance that would not be extended one year longer than might suit the convenience of our rivals. If we meant to improve, or maintain, our commercial position, we must do one of two things. Either we should be compelled to use the same weapons of pacific compulsion as our competitors

—*i.e.*, we must turn Protectionist like the rest of the world—or we must exert ourselves to retain all the existing neutral markets, and create fresh outlets for British enterprise. It was to the latter alternative that Mr. Chamberlain at this time inclined. In our Colonies and Protectorates—extended as they had recently been by the series of delimitations carried out by Lord Salisbury in Africa—might, perhaps, be found an escape from the growing, if not yet formulated, demand for a modification of our fiscal system.

Sanguine, therefore, as to the possibilities of his position, and confident of a great victory in the General Election of 1895, Mr. Chamberlain had flung himself heartily into the political fight. The chief articles in his Programme were unchanged—Better Housing for the Working-classes; a comprehensive scheme of Compensation for Injuries, and some form of Provision for Old Age. These were practically the same inducements as were held out by Conservative candidates, though on the last head many of them were reticent or significantly silent. But Liberal Unionists and Conservatives alike dwelt chiefly on the shortcomings of the Liberal Government. This, indeed, was their strongest card. The Gladstone-Rosebery Administration had attacked many interests, alarmed almost every class, and had not inspired complete confidence amongst its thick-and-thin supporters. Its defeat was a certainty, admitted by its own prophets, though the extent of the coming collapse had not been foreseen by the most sanguine of its opponents. Although the total turn-over of votes in Great Britain was estimated at less than a quarter of a million, the successes of the Unionists were so luckily distributed that they obtained a majority of 152 in the new House of Commons. This disproportionate advantage was, no doubt, partly due to the existence, in many Constituencies, of a compact Liberal Unionist body, not large enough to make any show, but sufficient to carry a seat. In every district the new Party had proved its importance, but in its recognised

centres—in London and Scotland as well as in the Midlands—it had almost regained the original strength of 1886. Then they had been between 70 and 80; in 1892 they were reduced to 45; now they were over 70 again. Nor in the allocation of “spheres of influence” under the compact had there been any friction between the two Coalition Parties. Of the five Constituencies as to which reasonable question might arise, three had been conceded by Liberal Unionists to Conservatives, and two by Conservatives to Liberal Unionists. Mr. Chamberlain, therefore, was justified in his boast at the Birmingham Conservative Club, that the Government of which he was a member had “the largest and most homogeneous majority of our time.” Naturally, he gave special credit to his own supporters in Birmingham and the neighbouring Constituencies—a solid wedge of Unionist representation.

In the final distribution of Offices under Lord Salisbury, the Liberal Unionists obtained their proportionate share of the Prime Minister's patronage. Besides the Duke of Devonshire, Mr. Chamberlain, and Mr. Goschen, they were represented within the Cabinet by Lord James of Hereford (Duchy of Lancaster) and the Marquess of Lansdowne (War Office); and outside that privileged, if unduly enlarged, body, by Mr. Austen Chamberlain (Civil Lord, Admiralty), Lord Selborne (Under Secretary, Colonial Office), Mr. Jesse Collings (Under Secretary, Home Office), Mr. T. W. Russell (Secretary, Local Government Board), and Mr. Powell Williams (Financial Secretary, War Office). But though it was complained by disappointed Conservative aspirants that Mr. Chamberlain had carried to a fault the recognised political virtue of rewarding one's friends, no personal exception could fairly be taken to the previous record of those Liberal Unionists who directly owed their promotion to his support of their claims. Several very capable young Conservatives had for the time to stand aside—this was part of the price paid for the Liberal Unionist alliance—but

on the first opportunity room was made for them, and such murmuring as was subsequently heard has not been directed against any exercise of undue influence by the Colonial Secretary.

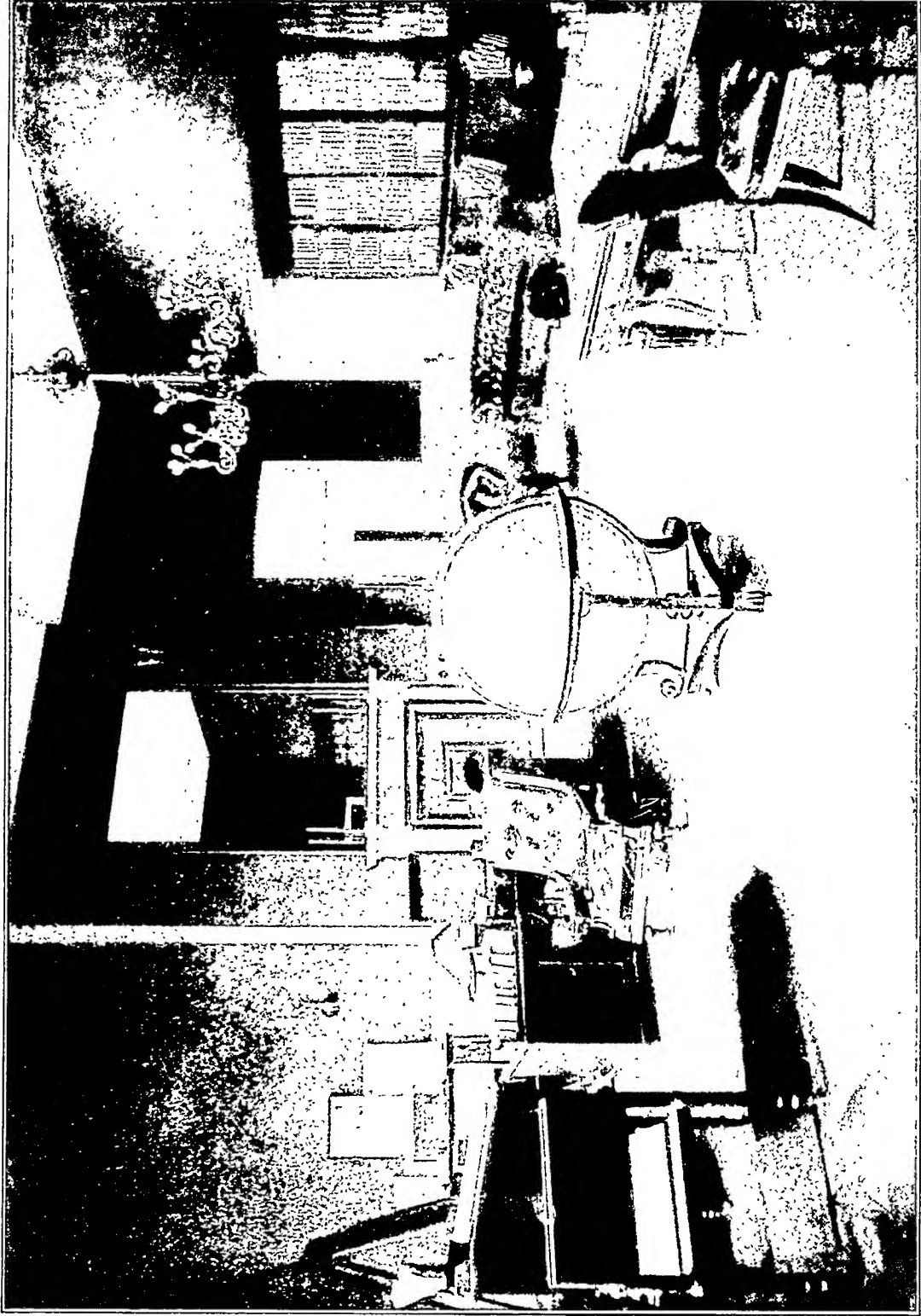
It was an instance of political irony that the Government which was placed in power chiefly that the country might have a quiet time, after the ineffective agitations of the previous three years, should, within a few months of taking Office, be called upon to face the most serious, because the most prolonged and complicated, crisis within the memory of living Englishmen. In the Crimean War we were engaged with a single enemy, but we had powerful allies; the Indian Mutiny was an agony of sentiment rather than a menace to our place in the world. In 1878, and again in 1885, we had been brought within close view of War with Russia, but never till the end of 1895 and the opening of 1896 had we been confronted with undisguised hostility by several Great Powers at once. Our relations with the French Republic had not recovered from the strain caused by the quarrel over Siam; Russia was irritated by our refusal to assist in coercing Japan into giving up the fruits of her victory over China; President Cleveland, playing for the vote of the Anti-British Democrats of the Southern and Western States, issued his Venezuelan Message, which was almost tantamount to a threat of War; finally, the Jameson Raid had complicated our already tangled relations with the Transvaal, and led to a message from the German Emperor to Mr. Krüger which Englishmen resented as a public insult to themselves. For some weeks it seemed possible that the opinion of the country would insist on active steps being taken to wipe out this affront. The danger was, not that we should be attacked, but that, in spite of other entanglements, we should ourselves be the aggressors. All this happened within a few weeks of the day on which Mr. George Curzon, Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs, declared, not without apparent justification, that we might





### THE COLONIAL SECRETARY'S ROOM

The immense pile of buildings which occupies the space between Downing Street and Charles Street in one direction, and between Parliament Street and St. James's Park in another, is occupied chiefly by the Foreign, Colonial, and India Offices. The Colonial Secretary's department is located in the Eastern part of the building, facing Parliament Street. The buildings were erected in the sixties under the supervision of Sir George Gilbert Scott, aided by Sir Matthew Digby Wyatt. Scott's first design was Gothic, but he was forced to adopt an Italian design, largely through the influence of Palmerston. The "battle of the styles" lasted from 1856 to 1861, and was fought out partly in the House of Commons.



H. N. KING.

COLONIAL SECRETARY'S ROOM AT THE FOREIGN OFFICE



look forward to a period of tranquillity under the prudent and sagacious administration of our Foreign Affairs by Lord Salisbury. The optimistic forecast was derided at the time by unfriendly critics—though they little guessed how prompt and signal would be their justification.

Mr. Chamberlain, like the rest of his colleagues, believed when he took office that he had before him several years of quiet administrative work. He found at the Colonial Office a Staff of public servants at least as efficient as those in any other Department. It was often said in the Colonies that the permanent officials in Downing Street were not more remarkable for the preciseness of their acquaintance with local affairs than for the courtesy with which they listened to every reasonable suggestion. The preliminaries were always smooth and satisfactory: the hitch was only felt when something had to be done. Everything was made ready, but nothing was accomplished. The efficiency ended as soon as the business passed from the hands of the permanent officials to those of the political Chief. Then began the delays and excuses, ending in the usual decision to leave things as they were. The bad reputation of the Colonial Office—in spite of its capable and reasonably vigorous Staff—had been earned by a succession of Secretaries of State who either wished to do nothing, or were discouraged by their colleagues from entering on any course that might entail increased expenditure and involve the Government in new responsibilities. Since every Colonial question more or else impinged on matters with which the Foreign Office was or might be concerned, a tradition had grown up that the former should be managed as if it were an unimportant *annexe* to the latter.

In order to maintain a state of things which saved trouble at home, if it bred discontent in the Empire, it had been the custom to send politicians to the Colonial Office who combined a reasonable aptitude for Departmental routine with a natural dislike for taking the initiative,

and who would allow their trained subordinates to conduct business along the traditional lines. The old regime was abruptly upset as soon as Mr. Chamberlain entered the Office. It is much to the credit alike of Minister and Staff that the new order of things was set going without personal friction. It is one of Mr. Chamberlain's most useful qualities that he can get good work out of capable men. Any energetic Chief can manage a corps of industrious clerks, but it requires a higher sort of power to appeal successfully to the brains and zeal of able and, possibly, self-sufficient experts—especially when they have for years been allowed to go their own irreproachable way. But it was not long before Mr. Chamberlain had established a thoroughly good understanding—not based entirely on the expectation of future favours. It is, however, true that he never forgets those who have rendered him useful services, nor will anything tempt him to throw over a subordinate who has honestly been doing his best under difficult circumstances. On more than one occasion he has been involved in an awkward position through the faulty judgment of a distant agent. Privately he has visited the mistake with the sharpest rebuke, but in public he has assumed full responsibility, and put the best aspect on a policy which he has quietly set himself to reverse. That easy sort of candour which shows itself in giving away other people may have its public uses, but it does not promote *esprit de corps* in a public Department.

Between the Foreign Office and the Colonial Office it was certain that a good understanding would be maintained so long as Lord Salisbury should remain Chief of the one and Mr. Chamberlain of the other. The war of words which had been so fiercely waged between them in the early Eighties had cleared the air, and resulted in a mutual sense of intellectual respect. Their long association in the work of keeping Mr. Gladstone out of power—or, at least, out of what they considered mischief—had led to as close an intimacy as the Conservative

Statesman permitted himself to enjoy with any of those colleagues who were not members of his own family. In spite of the confident prophecies which had been uttered by adversaries who hoped for sharp dissensions in the new Cabinet, it is well known that the personal relations of Lord Salisbury and Mr. Chamberlain were, from this point, so uniformly harmonious that no difficulty was experienced in adjusting any political differences that may have arisen on various questions of the day.

In subsequent Chapters a detailed account will be given of Mr. Chamberlain's administration of the different Colonies where history has shown itself in the making. Here it will be sufficient to review his general attitude with regard to Imperial and domestic politics during the last seven or eight years. One of his first pronouncements on taking Office was a promise not to neglect the interest of our “undeveloped estates” in the more backward Dependencies of West Africa and the West Indies—especially in the improvement of the means of communication. On this point he explained his views to a Deputation of influential merchants:—

“As to the general principle,” he said, “I go certainly as far as the farthest of you go; and I am very anxious that my fellow-countrymen should understand that we hope to develop the resources of such Colonies as those of which you have been speaking to the fullest extent. It is only in such developments that I see any solution of those social problems by which we are surrounded. Plenty of employment and a contented people go together, and there is no way of securing plenty of employment except by creating new markets and developing the old ones. The only dominion which in any way compared with the British dominion was that of the Romans, and it was to the credit of the Romans that they left behind them, wherever they went, traces of their passage and their civilisation in the form of admirable public works. I am sorry to say that Great Britain has largely neglected

its duty in that respect in the countries under her care. I admit to you, as I did to the House of Commons last night, that it is in a certain sense a new policy. It is a great policy. It is one, no doubt, open to criticism and to the fullest consideration. You cannot undertake a policy of this kind without a certain amount of risk; but if the people of this country, out of their superfluous wealth, are not willing to invest some of it in the development of what I have called their great estate, then I see no future for these countries, and I think it would probably have been better if they had never come under our rule. I hope that you, who have more than a mere general interest in these countries, will do what you can to popularise the subject.

“If that is the general policy the Government have in view, undoubtedly there is no more favourable instance on which to try it than the West African Colonies. There was a time when there was a feeling adverse to these Colonies, and when we should have been very well pleased to be rid of them for the benefit of any other Power; but that feeling has now, I believe, quite disappeared. There is no doubt that hardly any part of her Majesty’s dominions presents such opportunities for a rapidly increasing trade as these Gold Coast Colonies. You may rest assured that every assistance that we can give will be given to promote and assist better communication with the interior. A great deal has been done, as you are aware. The Lagos Railway may be said to have almost commenced—that is, we have authorised the building of the bridges, and we shall authorise the building of the railways as soon as the surveys are completed, and push them on as rapidly as possible. The Gold Coast Railway has been surveyed, and will be begun as soon as the point of commencement has been arranged. In Sierra Leone the survey has been completed for 150 miles. We have, however, a suggestion from Colonel Cardew for some modification of the line of route, and

these are details which will require some little consideration; but we will not waste time."

Mr. Chamberlain's qualifications for the post which he had assumed he has himself defined as his "belief in the British Empire," and "belief in the British race"—which is, he thinks, "the greatest of the governing races that the world has ever seen." On this point he deprecates the self-criticism in which Englishmen are apt to indulge. Though it does no harm at home it leads to misinterpretation abroad, where, not unnaturally, we are taken at our own valuation—if it happens to be unfavourable.

In the selection of Governors for those Colonies which possess Democratic Constitutions, he has been careful to ascertain beforehand that his nomination would not be unacceptable to the local politicians. His experience in Municipal administration at Birmingham has enabled him to understand and sympathise with the susceptibilities of public men who are very great persons at home, and fret under the semblance of external control. It would be absurd to suggest that Mr. Chamberlain is specially gifted with the indefinable quality of tact, but in his dealings with the somewhat aggressively independent Statesmen of Australasia, he has avoided unpleasant friction more successfully than predecessors who scrupulously observed and rigorously exacted all the courtesies of Diplomatic etiquette. When he has talked with the Colonial Premiers it has been "as man to man," not as a great personage of State granting an audience to a provincial Mayor. He has seemed to be, because he really has been, more anxious to learn than to instruct; to accept suggestions rather than to lay down the law. Colonial visitors to Downing Street, not merely Ministers and official delegates, have experienced a friendly greeting and cordial attention from the Chief of a Department in which they had expected to be met with distant affability and polite excuses for procrastination.



An excellent impression was produced in the opinion of the more progressive Colonies, which are chiefly concerned with commercial interests, by the Circular which the new Minister issued in November 1895:—

“1. I am impressed with the extreme importance of securing as large a share as possible of the mutual trade of the United Kingdom and the Colonies for British producers and manufacturers, whether located in the Colonies or in the United Kingdom.

“2. In the first place, therefore, I wish to investigate thoroughly the extent to which, in each of the Colonies, foreign imports of any kind have displaced, or are displacing, similar British goods, and the causes of such displacement.

“3. With this object, I take this opportunity of inviting the assistance of your Government in obtaining a Return which will show for the years 1884, 1889, and 1894—

“(a) The value (if any) of all articles, specified in the classification annexed, imported into the Colony under your Government from any foreign country or countries, whenever (and only when) the value of any article so imported from any foreign country, or countries, was 5 per cent or upwards of the total value of that article imported into the Colony from all sources, whether within or without the British Empire, and when the total value of that article imported was not less than £500.

“(b) The reasons which may have in each case induced the Colonial importer to prefer a foreign article to similar goods of British manufacture.

“4. These reasons (which should take the shape of a Report on each article separately, of which the foreign import exceeded 5 per cent of the whole import, and of which the total value imported was not less than £500, as defined above) should be classified and discussed under one or other of the following heads:—

“(a) Price (delivered in the Colony) of the foreign article as compared with the British.

“The term ‘price’ is not intended to include the Duty (if any) levied in a Colony; it is the ordinary price in bond, and this should be clearly understood in making the Report.

“But where it is found impossible to give any except the wholesale price (Duty paid), this should be stated, and the exact amount of Duty entering into the price should be given.

“In treating of price, regard should be had to cost of transport, facility of communication with any given country, subsidies to shipping, special railway rates, Bounties on export, terms of credit or payment given by British or foreign exporters, rates of discount, etc.

“(b) Quality and finish, as to which full particulars should be given.

“(c) Suitability of the goods for the market, their style or pattern.

“In connection with this, and in illustration of the reasons for the displacement of British goods of any class, it is important that patterns or specimens of the goods preferred should be sent home, unless the bulk is very great. This will be necessary chiefly in those cases where the difference cannot be fairly described in writing.

“(d) Difference of making-up or packing, as to which full particulars should be given.

“(e) False marking, such as piracy of trade marks, false indications of origin, or false indications of weight, measure, size, or number.

“(f) Any other cause which may exist should, of course, be stated.

“It sometimes happens that imports which actually came from foreign countries pass through Great Britain, and are included in Colonial statistics as British. Where this is a matter of common knowledge, I shall be obliged to you if you will treat of these imports under the headings embraced in this paragraph, notwithstanding the fact that they are not distinguished in the returns.

“5. With a view to facilitating the return, I annex to this despatch a draft of the form under which the particulars above requested may be returned; a list of commodities which is intended, as far as possible, to secure uniformity in making the return; and a schedule of instructions as to filling up the return, which I would beg you to commend to the attention of those on whom the preparation of the return may fall.

“6. To select the best classification to guide your advisers in their investigations has been a task of some difficulty. Most Colonies have classifications of their own, usually admirable of their kind; but as they have been mainly compiled for the special Tariff purposes of each Colony, they differ considerably from one another, and do not afford a basis of classification generally applicable to all Colonies. I have, therefore, on the whole, thought it best to adopt the condensed classification used by the Board of Trade in the annual Statistical Abstract for the exports of the United Kingdom. At the same time, I suggest that those responsible in each Colony for furnishing the returns for which I am asking should expand their Return under each chief heading by such detailed sub-heads as may be suggested either by the ordinary Colonial Returns, or by the course of trade in the particular Colony; and in this connection I append a schedule of subdivisions suggested by various Chambers of Commerce in this country.

“7. I am further desirous of receiving from you a Return of any products of the Colony under your Government which might advantageously be exported to the United Kingdom, or other parts of the British Empire, but do not at present find a sufficient market there, with any information in regard to quality, price, or freight which may be useful to British importers. I mention the matter here that you may be prepared with information; but I am contemplating the preparation of a further and fuller Despatch on this branch of the subject.

"8. I am well aware how much has been, and is being, done in this direction by the Self-Governing Colonies through the High Commissioner for Canada, and through the Agents General, and also by the Imperial Institute, the Royal Colonial Institute, and other public bodies.

"I am glad to have this opportunity of expressing my admiration for the excellence of this work; but on a matter of such importance no additional efforts or opportunities of acquiring information can be superfluous.

"9. I shall be glad to have these returns as soon as possible, and shall greatly appreciate your expedition in the matter."

At the time when the South African trouble was coming to a head, the Colonial Secretary attended a Banquet held to celebrate the completion of the railway between Natal and the Transvaal. He made a brief reference to the possibility of a future Customs Union embracing the whole Empire:—

"It is a dream which has vividly impressed itself on the mind of the English-speaking race, and who does not admit that dreams of that kind, which have so powerful an influence upon the imagination of men, have, somehow or another, an unaccountable way of being realised in their own time? If it be a dream, it is a dream that appeals to the highest sentiments of patriotism, and even of our material interests. It is a dream which is calculated to stimulate and to inspire every one who cares for the future of the Anglo-Saxon people. I think, myself, that the spirit of the time is, at all events, in the direction of such a movement. How far it will carry us, no man can tell; but, believe me, upon the temper and the tone in which we approach the solution of the problems which are now coming upon us, depend the security and the maintenance of that world-wide dominion, that edifice of Imperial rule, which has been solely built up for us by those who have gone before."

He was aware, he said, that a critical moment was

approaching in the history of that world-wide dominion to which no Englishman could allude without a thrill of enthusiasm and patriotism, and which had been the admiration and perhaps the envy of foreign nations. Yet it was hung together by a thread so slender that even a breath, it might seem, would sever it. After a brief reference to those "despairing" Statesmen who had believed that the Colonies, when they had grown strong and independent, would demand entire separation from the parent stem, he said that the time had come, the conditions had been fulfilled, yet the anticipated result had not occurred. As the possibility of Separation had become greater the desire for Separation had become less. The Colonists had begun to realise that no separate existence, "however splendid," could compare with that which they enjoyed, equally with ourselves, as co-heirs of all the traditions of the past and as joint-partakers in all the influence, resources, and power of the British Empire.

In venturing on this review and forecast of Colonial feeling, Mr. Chamberlain, of course, had no idea that the sentiment of Imperial patriotism would within a few years receive a powerful, if, perhaps, a temporary impulse—not so much from our military undertakings in South Africa as from the malicious slanders with which English and Colonial soldiers were alike assailed. At any time it is probable that a similar provocation would be followed by a like response, since the British, for all its bickerings, is a clannish race, and may always be trusted to unite against outsiders. But when these words were uttered Mr. Chamberlain had no such convincing evidence that the prevailing sentiment in the Colonies was one of loyal, if loose, attachment to the Mother Country. That was the subsequent and absolutely unforeseen corroboration—not the basis—of his declaration of faith. How far it was well-founded, it is impossible to say. Mr. Chamberlain, no doubt, is well aware that, in every Colony, there is a strong section of opinion—it may even attain the dignity

of a Party—which is almost avowedly Anti-English. In ordinary times it is more or less manipulated by politicians of Irish birth or descent, or by Labour Leaders bent on excluding commercial and industrial competition, and laying steady pressure on the local Ministry to thwart any policy that may appear to be inspired from London or prove advantageous to the people of Great Britain. The exponents of this acrid patriotism have to withdraw to the background when a common danger threatens, or some single cause engages, the whole British race; but, so soon as the hour of emergency has passed away, they are at work again—stealthily or noisily, as the case may be. But though their action must be understood by Mr. Chamberlain, he has never taken public note of it. To refer to it except in terms of implied or expressed censure would be impossible, and for an Imperial Statesman to volunteer an opinion on the internal affairs of a Colony would be a very unwise departure from that neutrality which is both expedient and Constitutional. Now and again questions must arise—especially in connection with our foreign relations—when it may be impossible to avoid use of the Veto residing in the Governors, but it has been as much the object of Mr. Chamberlain as of his less energetic predecessors to rely only in the last resort on that undesirable expedient.

Even in 1895, when the new Government had only been installed a few months in power, the survivors of the old Education League at Birmingham had shown signs of restiveness. They were uneasy about the understanding, into which the Liberal Unionist Leaders had entered, as to giving assistance to the Voluntary Schools in their competition with the Board Schools. Mr. George Dixon had introduced a Deputation to the Duke of Devonshire as Lord President of the Council, protesting by anticipation against any scheme for giving a subvention from the Rates to any institutions that maintained doctrinal teaching. Next year (1896) the question was raised in a more acute

form when the Government Bill was introduced. It is unnecessary here to describe a Measure which never passed into law or to examine the reasons for its miscarriage—especially as it was a scheme which Mr. Chamberlain supported rather as part of his bargain with the Conservatives than as an expression of his personal views.

His position was, in fact, analogous, *mutatis mutandis*, to that held by Lord Salisbury in 1891 with regard to the abolition of School Fees. Each Leader in turn found himself at issue with the extreme men of his own Party. Mr. Chamberlain, however, expressed no hesitating concurrence in the common policy of the Government. While he admitted that in certain respects the Government Bill might be improved—*e.g.*, he would favour the introduction of a Conscience Clause in Denominational Training Colleges, and would increase the relief proposed for necessitous Board Schools—he approved of the leading principles of the Measure. He preferred the suggested Education Authority elected on ordinary representative lines to a School Board resting on a Cumulative Franchise (invented chiefly to give Roman Catholic minorities a chance of representation). He also praised the arrangements under which each Local Authority would be enabled to adapt the teaching to the needs and tastes of the neighbourhood. At the same time he admitted that he still retained his abstract preference for Universal Secular Instruction in all National Elementary Schools, though that, he pointed out, was an ideal too expensive to realise, and unattainable in the present or any probable condition of English Parties. When the Bill had to be withdrawn in July, owing to a wrecking Amendment which Mr. Balfour had incautiously accepted, loud complaints were made of his management of the Measure in the House of Commons. Mr. Chamberlain promptly came forward to defend him. “Nothing,” he said, “could be ‘more ungenerous’ than to blame the Leader of the House for the faults of a system which made legislation so difficult. No Party could desire a Leader

more skilful in debate, more courageous in action, more loyal to his colleagues, more courteous to his opponents, more mindful of the high and honourable traditions of the House of Commons." A similar tribute was paid by Sir Michael Hicks-Beach. This, he said, should dispose of the legend that Mr. Goschen, Mr. Chamberlain, and himself were all burning to obtain the succession to Mr. Balfour.

At the beginning of 1896 (25th January), before the echoes of the Venezuelan storm had died away, Mr. Chamberlain had delivered his views on a position which might have become awkward if the Washington Government, as soon as we were brought face to face with German enmity, had not so far moderated its tone as to make it possible for us to enter into friendly negotiations. There had been misapprehension, said Mr. Chamberlain, on both sides. This, no doubt, was true. But only on one side had there been rudeness and menace. Still, this was not a time to stand on Diplomatic punctilio. Mr. Chamberlain, whose early sympathy with American institutions had been increased by his wife's connection with the most attractive and cultured circle in Boston society, was especially qualified to assume the part of mediator. On the British side, he explained, it had been thought that the Americans wished to pick a quarrel. At Washington it was believed that we meant to impugn the Monroe Doctrine. Fortunately, however, there had been time for reflection. All that was best in the United States, he said, would regard with horror a War with this country, and he was sure that President Cleveland was "incapable of the wickedness of inciting two kindred nations to strife." In point of fact, what he had done was to angle for the Democratic Vote by insulting Great Britain, but, unscrupulous as he was in domestic politics, he had never meant to bring about a Naval War for which his country was absolutely unprepared. To these facts, however, Mr. Chamberlain did not refer. He confined himself to stating



such truths as were inoffensive—that we had never disputed a Doctrine which was originated by a British Statesman, and that we did not covet another inch of territory on American soil.

In the House of Commons, on the Vote of Censure moved at the opening of the Session, Mr. Chamberlain entered on a defence of the Government policy in Egypt—especially of the proposed Expedition up the Nile, and emphasised his separation, which he had on more than one previous occasion announced, from the diminishing band of politicians who thought that our only duty towards the Khedive was to prepare for leaving him to deal as best he might with his difficulties in the Soudan. Mr. Chamberlain avowed his pride in the work accomplished in Egypt by British officers and administrators. But all the good they had carried out would be undone if we were to withdraw. As for the proposed advance beyond the boundary of Egypt proper, he pointed out that, though the intervening desert was a barrier against invasion, Wady Halfa was a screen for raids and incursions. The recent defeat of the Italians at Adowa had created a ferment among the Dervishes and created a new situation. In undertaking this Expedition we were acting with the cordial concurrence of Italy, and with the approval of Germany and Austria; nor was there any need to apprehend any different expression of opinion from France and Russia. The Government did not contemplate any “gigantic military enterprise”—their policy was confined to the immediate needs of Egypt.

Mr. Chamberlain, like the rest of his colleagues, was not yet aware that only a still bolder policy would avail to keep Mahdism in check, and the conditional pledge which he gave as to the limited nature of the Expedition, if not accepted as altogether wise by military experts, was a faithful representation of the views of the Government. Wady Halfa was then believed to be the utmost point to which advance was reasonably practicable, nor was public

opinion—either at home or abroad—yet ripe for a complete reconquest of the Soudan.

During the whole of 1896, and for many months afterwards, the time and energy of the Colonial Secretary were almost absorbed by South African affairs, but early in November he delivered an address at Birmingham on the text that Commerce is the greatest of political interests—a point of view which was forced upon him by his Departmental position. “All the great Offices of States,” he said, “are occupied with commercial affairs. The Foreign Office and the Colonial Office are engaged in getting new markets and defending old ones. The War Office and the Admiralty are mostly occupied in preparations for the defence of those markets, and for the protection of our commerce. The Boards of Agriculture and Trade are entirely concerned with those two great branches of industry. Even the Education Department bases its claim for public money upon the necessity of keeping our people well to the front in the competition—the commercial competition—which they have to sustain; and the Home Office finds the largest scope for its activity in the protection of the life, the health, and the comfort of the vast army of manual labourers engaged in those industries.” The Government, therefore, which did most to increase our trade and establish it on a firm basis was most deserving of popular approval. This test was one from which the existing Ministry need not shrink. It had endeavoured not unsuccessfully to increase and develop free markets. While the Colonial Possessions of France and Germany were but an increasing burden to the Mother Countries, the British Colonies soon became self-supporting. Such results justified the continuous extensions of our territories, and, though the pessimistic accounts of British trade would not bear examination, it was necessary for us to be watchful of our commercial interests.

Apart from the incessant controversy about South African affairs, 1897 was to Mr. Chamberlain an excep-

tionally busy year. The origin and development of Australian Confederation are sketched in another Chapter, but the ordinary work in Downing Street was largely increased by the long conferences and private conversations held with the Colonial Premiers who had come to London for the Jubilee. It was largely owing to Mr. Chamberlain's insistence that the Government resolved to denounce our Commercial Treaties with Germany and Belgium, and risk the outcry that would certainly be raised by the more nervous disciples of Free Trade. They had taken alarm at the Foreign Prison-made Goods Bill, and were in the mood to charge Ministers with every kind of financial enormity. But it was with no intention of tampering with our fiscal system that the Government at last consented to free the Empire from the restraints imposed on the legislative and commercial independence of the Colonies. Some of these had plainly refused to submit any longer to limitations imposed without their consent being obtained or asked. Sir Wilfrid Laurier, the Dominion Premier, had pressed the Canadian demand with unusual vigour. The Colonies at this time were so much in favour with Englishmen, and Germany had fallen into such bad odour, that a policy on which no Ministry would have ventured four or five years before was accepted in Parliament with little more than formal protest, leading to an interesting if almost abstract discussion.

The Voluntary Schools Act passed in 1897, was a temporary expedient rendered necessary by the abandonment of the more comprehensive Measure proposed in 1896, and was only brought forward as part of a still more general scheme of Educational Reform to which Ministers were pledged. It provided for the payment from Imperial funds of a Grant-in-Aid not exceeding a sum that would work out at 5s. a head for every child attending the Voluntary Schools. Large discretionary powers in the distribution of this Grant were left to the Education Department, and by recognising the principle of Association among

neighbouring schools it was rendered possible to proportion the assistance given to the special needs of a locality. The scheme was one about which Mr. Chamberlain affected no enthusiasm, though he supported it as part of his arrangement with the Conservatives. As a set-off they agreed to the Necessitous Board Schools Bill, which authorised relief on a scale that Ministers believed to be sufficient, while the Opposition, of course, complained that Church institutions had been unduly favoured. The whole arrangement being avowedly temporary, not much interest was felt in the Parliamentary discussion.

Keener excitement was provoked by the Workmen's Compensation Bill, which did not become law without strong opposition from a section of the Conservative Party—led by Lord Londonderry. As an ex-Minister who had not been offered a sufficiently dignified office in the new Cabinet, and as a generous employer of labour who resented legal interference between himself and his men, he considered himself entitled to resist a Measure which was known to be inspired by the Radical members of the Unionist Government. Though it was piloted through the House of Commons by the Conservative Home Secretary (Sir Matthew White Ridley) it had been practically drafted, and throughout its course was vigilantly watched, by Mr. Chamberlain. With certain important exceptions—agricultural labourers, seamen, domestic servants, and persons employed in workshops where no machinery was in use—it provided the working classes as a whole with what was hoped would be a cheap and easy means of compensation in case of all accidents suffered in the course of their employment. In case of death the sum payable to a workman's representatives would be, according to his rate of wages, between £150 and £300: in case of disablement, a weekly allowance not exceeding half his weekly earnings or more than 20s. If the amount could not be settled by agreement reference was to be made to arbitration. "Contracting out" was permitted, if the Registrar of Friendly

Societies should certify that the workman was entitled to receive under a voluntary arrangement benefits not less than those offered by the Act. In refusing to extend the Measure to seamen, Mr. Chamberlain explained that provision must be made for them under a future Act, but he refused to except miners from the present one. The most important Amendments to which he consented were (1) that where the voluntary fund had proved insufficient the injured person might claim for the balance under the Act; and (2) that when the weekly allowance had been paid for more than twelve months either party should be entitled to have the total liability commuted in a lump sum. In nearly every instance, the Government proposals were carried by large majorities in the House of Commons, and the slight Amendments introduced by the Peers were, Mr. Chamberlain said, not of such a character as to diminish the benefits offered to the working classes.

In one respect the working of the Act has somewhat disappointed its authors. The contentious disposition of some employers on the one hand, and of certain Trade Union Leaders on the other, assisted by the perversely conscientious ingenuity of the lawyers, has subsequently thrown an element of doubt and obscurity over an Act which to the lay mind had been perfectly clear and consistent. It has, therefore, given rise to a certain amount of expensive litigation. But by sweeping away the legal technicalities which had gathered round the doctrines of "Common Employment," and the various forms of "Negligence," as well as by promoting the private settlement of disputes, and by encouraging the operation of voluntary institutions such as that maintained on the London and North-Western Railway, and in Lord Dudley's collieries, the Act is universally admitted to have given more practical assistance to the working men than any previous legislation as to the Liability of Employers.

One thing, of course, it has not accomplished, Radical critics complained that it placed no direct pressure on a

careless employer to observe such precautions as would reduce the risks of employment and prevent many so-called accidents. He would take out a general policy with an Insurance Society, and it would be no concern of his how much money, not his own, he had to pay to his work-people. The answer is that an employer who had acquired a bad name in this respect would not find a Company to accept his insurance except at a greatly enhanced rate—if at all. This consideration would operate on the mind of the most callous employer; but to get rid altogether of the danger—not, indeed, quite imaginary—is practically impossible. If the law were to forbid insurance against an employer's liability the result in many cases would be that the workman would have no remedy. Unless the employer were a very substantial man a bad accident in his mine or factory might bring him to bankruptcy, and the preferential claims of his work-people would be worth little or nothing.

Although Lord Londonderry had not resisted the Second Reading in the Upper House, but confined himself to moving Amendments (most of which were rejected), he did not pretend to accept the principle of the Measure. He went so far as to offer his resignation of the chairmanship of the Northern Union of Conservative Associations, on the ground that the Act had been passed through "the dominating will of the Colonial Secretary, whose radical views on Home politics we have always regarded with disapproval, however much we may admire him as an Imperialist." The fact that Lord Londonderry has since accepted office in the same Administration as Mr. Chamberlain—first as Postmaster-General, and afterwards as Minister of Education—shows that the types of Conservatism and Social Radicalism which they respectively represent have been found, on trial, to be separated by no fundamental incompatibility of temper.

On 3rd November Mr. Chamberlain, who had been elected Lord Rector of Glasgow University on a "strict

Party vote," delivered an Address on Patriotism. Having pointed out that the word "patriot" was not to be found in Shakespeare, he went on to quote Bolingbroke's use of the term. The object of a "patriot prince" was, he said, to "give ease and encouragement to manufactories at home, to assist and protect trade abroad, to improve and keep in heart the national Colonies like so many farms of the Mother Country"—a strangely modern view, except for the theory of Imperial exploitation implied in the last metaphor.

This exercise in abstract rhetoric—a form of composition to which Mr. Chamberlain had devoted little attention since his Debating Society days—was also notable for the admission that his political outlook had been considerably modified by changing times and altered circumstances, but he asked his audience of young enthusiasts to believe that through all vicissitudes he had always sought—it might be with faltering steps and by mistaken roads—the greatness of the Empire and the welfare of the people at large. A vague attachment to the whole human race was, he said, a poor substitute for the performance of the duties of a citizen. Professions of universal philanthropy afforded no excuse for neglecting the interests of one's own country. He believed that our special mission in the world was to colonise and civilise. It was untrue that we had not the strength to sustain the burden of Empire—that the "weary Titan was staggering under the too vast orb of his fate."

"We do not lack efficient instruments for our great purpose, and we can still count on the energy and devotion of our countrymen, and on their ability to win the confidence and respect of the people they were sent to govern for their good. On the bleak mountains of the Indian frontier, amidst the sands of the Soudan, in the swamps and forests of Western Africa—wherever the British flag floats—Englishmen, Scotsmen, and Irishmen are to-day fronting every danger and enduring every hardship—living

as brave men and dying as heroes, in the faithful performance of duty and the passionate love of their country. They ask from us that their sacrifices shall not be in vain.

“If such is still the spirit of our people why should we shrink from our task, or allow the sceptre of Empire to fall from our hands—

‘Thro’ craven fears of being great?’

“I have faith in our race and our nation. I believe that, with all the force and enthusiasm of which Democracy alone is capable, they will complete and maintain that splendid edifice of our greatness, which, commenced under aristocratic auspices, has received in these later times its greatest extension; and that the fixity of purpose and strength of will which are necessary to this end will be supplied by that National Patriotism which sustains the most strenuous efforts and makes possible the greatest sacrifices.”

This elevated appeal may be contrasted with the speech made before the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce in which he had explained that the chief function of Statesmanship was to develop Trade. To die for one's country and to push one's business—this was the double mission of the patriot. A truly British combination of duties, which gave our French critics much good-humoured amusement.

A change from these amiable generalities was afforded by a sharp encounter between Mr. Chamberlain and Sir William Harcourt—the two Statesmen were never more happy than when girding at each other. A succession of favourable by-elections (Middleton, Liverpool, and Deptford) had put heart into the Liberals. Mr. Chamberlain had professed to feel no surprise. The successes of the Unionists at the General Election had been due not so much to their own merits as to the faults and defects of the other side. It was, he pleasantly remarked, largely a “penal operation.” Having been punished, it was only



likely that "the criminals" would be again taken into favour by some of those who had assisted at "the execution." The metaphors were resented by Sir William, who declared, in a letter written for publication, that Mr. Chamberlain was what was called at cards a "bad loser." "When the odd trick as well as the honours were marked against him he lost his temper as well as the game." Quoting Mr. Chamberlain's words, Sir William exclaimed, "what an agreeable and graceful style of political criticism! Its venom is that of a serpent gnawing the file. Did he not discern the 'boomerang' character of this effusion of bile? The old game of dishing the Whigs had broken down, and Mr. Chamberlain bade fair to become a Disraeli *manqué*. He had tempted the Tories to sell their souls for votes. They had not got their votes, and their souls were lost. Mr. Chamberlain perishing by his own virtue was a spectacle for men and angels! How sharper than a serpent's tooth it was to have a thankless Democracy, the last refuge of Patriotism!"

Mr. Chamberlain retorted by calling attention to the profusion of mixed metaphors in which Sir William had indulged. What exquisite humour to say that he had tempted the Tories to sell their souls for votes! What delicate innuendo! What sweet reasonableness! It was said that Sir William, at "one time in his varied career," had considered Mr. Disraeli a model to be imitated. Mr. Chamberlain preferred to compare him to the Statesman of whom Mr. Lecky had written: "Lord Thurlow, though he had a strong natural bias towards harsh and despotic measures, seems to have taken his politics much as he took his briefs, and he had that air of cynical, brutal, and almost reckless candour which is sometimes the best veil of a time-serving and highly-calculating nature."

The passage in the Queen's Speech in which Mr. Chamberlain had most concern (8th Feb. 1899) again called attention to the distress caused in the West Indies

by the fall in the price of sugar; expressed a hope that the artificial causes of that distress might be modified by the negotiations proceeding for a general conference with the Bounty-giving Governments; but announced that before such relief could become effectual it would be necessary to vote a subsidy to the struggling Colonies so that they might tide over the crisis. This proposal had been foreshadowed by the Colonial Secretary in a speech at Liverpool. On this occasion, he explained that the Imperialism in which he believed aimed less at acquiring new territory than at preserving free markets, though he expressed his approval of Lord Rosebery's picturesque phrase that it was our duty to "peg out claims for posterity." It was a matter of course, that the West Indian policy which Mr. Chamberlain announced should be attacked by economic thinkers like Mr. John Morley, who declared that this subvention to the Sugar Colonies was very like a Bounty though "wrapped up in paper of a different colour and bearing a different label."

In the domestic legislation of the year Mr. Chamberlain was believed to have had more than a hand in the Bills for Irish Local Government and for creating Municipal Boroughs in the County of London. Both were in absolute harmony with his own life-long belief in Decentralised Self-Government, but, while the former was almost forced upon the Conservatives of the rank and file, they adopted the latter with alacrity. The system now established in Ireland differed from that existing in England and Scotland, in that no Parish Councils were set up. The local administration was given over to County Councils, District Councils (Urban or Rural), and Boards of Guardians—the franchise adopted being the Parliamentary one except that Peers and women ratepayers were not excluded. To the County Councils were given the financial and administrative powers hitherto exercised by Grand Juries and by County Presentment Sessions, and the levying of such Poor Rate as did not fall within the Urban

County District. The question of compensation for malicious injuries was, however, left for the County Courts—with appeal to the Judge of Assize. The Rural District Councils acquired the powers of the Baronial Presentment Sessions and the Rural Sanitary Authorities, but on various heads of expenditure a veto could be laid by the County Council, and in certain cases an alternate appeal lies to the Local Government Board. The Urban District Councils became the road authorities and were to levy all the rates.

Such were some of the privileges which the Unionist Government entrusted to the elected representatives of a country in which two-thirds of the population were more or less disaffected to the "English connection." In spite of the administrative limitations and financial safeguards imposed, the Act has, no doubt, taken away most of the authority that still remained to the Loyalist and landlord class, and it should be no matter for wonder that it was disliked by many of those who were compelled by Party ties to give it their support. Yet it is difficult to see how the Conservatives any more than the Radical Unionists could further postpone a Measure to the principle of which they were so deeply committed. One of the favourite arguments against Home Rule had been that except in the matter of Local Government the Irishman stood at no political disadvantage as compared with the Englishman or Scotchman, and this remaining inequality the Unionists had proved, by their abortive Bill in 1892, that they intended to remove.

The London Bill, though the creation of a number of Municipalities to which important powers were reserved was not intended to curtail the existing authority of the County Council, awakened such keen hostility, even before the text had been seen, that Mr. Balfour had to announce in June that the scheme would be postponed to another Session.

Though Mr. Chamberlain, in 1898, made frequent

appearances in Parliament, and took an active part in the discussions, especially on South African policy, his most important and characteristic utterances were delivered out of doors. The speech which he made at Birmingham on 13th May, was, in its form, somewhat embarrassing to the Government. Since the days of the Crimean War, he said, Great Britain had maintained a policy of isolation. This had been all very well so long as each of the Great Powers worked only for its own hand. Now, however, a new situation had arisen. The Great Powers had made alliances, and, so long as we remained outside these alliances, we were liable to be attacked by an overwhelming combination. Obviously, it was our first duty to consolidate the internal strength of the Empire. Our next duty was to establish and maintain bonds of unity with our kinsmen across the Atlantic. Even war might be worth the sacrifice if the Stars and Stripes and the Union Jack were to wave together over an Anglo-American alliance on behalf of some great and noble cause! When he turned to the position of affairs in China, he remarked that it had been foreseen that Russia would, before long, extend her dominion to the South, so as to obtain a port and harbour free from ice. This is what had happened. Russia had taken Port Arthur and Talienwan. Then followed a passage which startled the Diplomatic world. "As to the methods in which Russia secured that occupation, as to the representations which were made, and repudiated as soon as they were, as to the representations which were given, and broken a fortnight afterwards, I had better say 'Who sups with the Devil must have a long spoon.'"

If the phrase was extemporised the argument had been carefully elaborated. The casual expression harmonised with the whole context. Once again Mr. Chamberlain dwelt on the dangers of our policy of isolation. If it were to be persisted in, the future of China, he said, would be settled without consulting us or con-

sidering our interests. If, on the other hand, we intended to enforce the policy of the Open Door, we must not allow the Jingoës to drive us into a quarrel with all the world at once. We must not reject the idea of alliance with those Powers whose interest most nearly coincided with our own.

It was only natural that the Liberals should ask for an explanation of this remarkable utterance, and, in the Upper House, Lord Kimberley put a Question to the Prime Minister which he associated with the Birmingham utterance. Lord Salisbury, however, refused to be drawn. He could not discuss his colleague's speech—not having the text in his hand! Passing away from a topic which, by his silence, he admitted to be somewhat delicate, he explained the action of the Government in taking possession of Wei-hai-wei. On the attack being renewed in the Lower House, Mr. Chamberlain made a vigorous reply. To the Radicals, exulting in his having been thrown over, they said, by his Chief and his colleagues, he pointed out that the sufficient answer was that he had not resigned! If a Cabinet Minister differed from the Prime Minister on a broad question of policy he was bound to retire—though it was absurd to suppose that every member of a Cabinet was responsible for every word and every phrase used by another member. What he had meant was that if this country insisted on remaining isolated it must take the consequences. He did not advise alliances or seek for them, but he did say, for himself, that he earnestly desired close, cordial, and intimate relations with the United States.

In the future it is possible that Mr. Chamberlain's sanguine utterance may be justified, but when it was published it did, no doubt, do something to defeat the very object at which he was aiming. Even the politicians who are best affected to us at Washington are shy of giving offence to the Irish, whose influence is quite out of proportion to their number—any political candidate







RUSSELL.

MR. CHAMBERLAIN AT HIS DESK





who is reasonably suspected of British leanings, having a black mark made against him by the Party managers. Nor is this anti-English sentiment confined to Americans of Irish birth or extraction. It is equally strong among the farmers of the Western and Southern States. This is a fact of which Mr. Chamberlain must have been well aware, though his personal impressions of American thought and feeling are chiefly drawn from the East. This, though it typifies what is most effective and progressive in the life of America, no more represents the collective sentiment of the Union than London or Oxford and Cambridge reflect the opinions of the British electorate. No special harm has been done by Mr. Chamberlain's defiance of Russia, whose unfriendly action had already stopped short of actual war. But the premature bid for an American alliance had for the time damaged rather than improved the Diplomatic relations between the two Anglo-Saxon peoples.

At the Mansion-house on 9th November, and in a series of speeches delivered a few days later at Manchester, Mr. Chamberlain, without retiring from the position he had taken up earlier in the year, showed more of the restraint advisable in dealing with Foreign Affairs. He scrupulously avoided any air of triumph in his reference to the dramatic incident which had been so wounding to French pride. "Fashoda," he said, was "but a symbol." The great issue was the control of the whole Valley of the Nile. On that question there could be no compromise. It was for Egypt a question of life or death. His references to the Convention recently concluded with France as to our West African Colonies and Spheres of Influence, were studiously moderate, and he avoided any suggestion that we had made an advantageous bargain, though as a matter of fact he was fairly well satisfied with the result of the negotiations conducted by the Foreign Office. He was on more treacherous ground when he entered on a general defence of the Government's dealings

with Chinese affairs. Their guiding policy, he said, had been to do nothing to assist in breaking up that ancient Empire, to guarantee our naval position, and to maintain an Open Door for the commerce of all nations. The difficulty was to prevent its being slammed in our face. As to making an agreement with Russia, we had made agreements before! An agreement might not be impossible, and certainly it would be desirable. But the main effect of an agreement was to explain the objects and intentions of the parties. It would not be permanently valid—such was the teaching of experience—unless it were for the interest of both parties to maintain it, or one of them were strong enough to enforce it.

The political cynicism of this avowal was quite alien to Mr. Chamberlain's character. It expressed the disgusted acquiescence of a man of business on discovering that the code of honour which prevails amongst ordinary tradesmen is too exalted for International politics. He could understand that the other party to a bargain would try to get the best of it, and might employ underhand tricks to effect that object—all this would be regarded, more or less, as part of the game. But that a promise once given should be broken without any shadow of excuse, repudiated almost as soon as it had been offered, was, perhaps, something of a revelation to Mr. Chamberlain. His previous dealings, in commerce as in politics, had been with men who professed at least that their word was as good as their bond, and if they acted shabbily would have the grace to be ashamed of it. His anger at the Russian Chancellor's breach of faith—which an experienced Diplomatist would have noted in a bland Memorandum—had led to the outburst on which Lord Salisbury preferred not to offer any comment. But it had given way to a somewhat exaggerated sense of disillusionment.

It was unfortunate that the milder mood displayed at Manchester did not last many months. The indignant rebuke which he had administered to the Russian Govern-

ment in October 1898, was followed in November 1899, by an expression which, quite unfairly though not unplausibly, was represented as an affront to the French people. For the actual words used there was, indeed, even more moral justification than for the attack on Russian bad faith. The Colonial Secretary's temper, meantime, had been sorely tried by the shufflings and procrastinations of the Transvaal Government. He had been working day and night to arrange a pacific settlement of the various disputes between the British and the Boers, and, almost to the end, he was hopeful that Mr. Kruger would consent to make the reasonable concessions demanded in London. All the time he believed—not without reason—that his efforts were being frustrated through the encouragement given to Mr. Kruger by the anti-English Press on the Continent, and especially in France. In point of spite and scurrility, there was not, perhaps, much to choose amongst the libellous products of the various Capitals, but for sheer filthiness a certain French caricaturist easily took the palm. This cartoon so far succeeded in its purpose that it irritated every Englishman who saw it, and Mr. Chamberlain was but expressing the general feeling of his countrymen when, in a speech delivered at Leicester, he advised Frenchmen to "mend their manners."

It is true that the rebuke was intended merely for the Parisian Press, but it was taken as of general application, and raised no little indignation amongst a people who, before everything, pride themselves on their politeness. They were still smarting under the Fashoda incident, and this added grievance produced for some weeks a state of feeling that might have endangered the relations between the two countries, but for the studiously correct attitude of their Governments. The display of ill-will was naturally taken by the Boers to indicate that if they pushed their dispute with Great Britain to an extreme they might count on the intervention of France with certainty, and probably also on that of Russia. This, at least, was

the tale told to Mr. Krüger by his Hollander agents in Europe.

But the ebullition of enmity in France—which was but a passing mood—was not the worst result of Mr. Chamberlain's speech. It happened that the German Emperor had just paid a visit to Queen Victoria—for no other purpose, it was believed, than to make it known that he felt no sympathy with the malevolence towards England exhibited by the Berlin Press. He held a long and friendly conversation with the Colonial Secretary, and, in that hearty downright manner which is the best screen for Diplomatic craft, he conveyed a general impression of personal friendliness towards this country, and dispelled the idea that Germany entertained sinister or aggressive designs in South Africa. His assurances may have been perfectly sincere as to the intentions in his own mind, nor would so shrewd a man as Mr. Chamberlain have been deceived by sham professions of good-will towards Great Britain. But it is a not uncommon mistake with Englishmen to believe that so autocratic and able a Ruler as William II. is omnipotent in his own country. Relying on the cordial attitude of the Kaiser, Mr. Chamberlain (at Leicester, 30th November 1899) made an overture of something more than friendship to the German nation. The main character of the Teutonic race differed, he said, very slightly from that of the Anglo-Saxon race. The same sentiments that brought us into close sympathy with the United States might also bring us into closer "sympathy and alliance" with Germany. If the "union between England and America" was a powerful factor in the cause of Peace, a new "Triple Alliance between the Teutonic and the two great branches of the Anglo-Saxon race" would be "a still more potent influence in the future of the world." It is true that Mr. Chamberlain qualified these remarks by explaining that he did not contemplate any written instrument. Indeed, an "understanding" might be better than "an alliance, which might

stereotype arrangements that could not be accepted as permanent in view of the changing circumstances from day to day."

The annoyance caused by this speech in France was exceeded by the contemptuous indignation expressed in Germany. Not only irresponsible newspapers but Ministers themselves repudiated the interpretation which, somewhat unfairly, had been placed on the optimistic language of the Colonial Secretary. In the United States the disclaimer, if less offensive, was equally distinct. Though the solidarity of "Anglo-Saxon feeling" had, no doubt, been increased by the recent action of Great Britain in refusing to support, and threatening to resist, the attempted European intervention between the United States and Spain—though it was generally felt that, at a real pinch, England and America might each rely on the other for help—the memory of a Democracy is short and its gratitude not long-enduring. Any talk of alliance—so alien to American traditions—was alarming to steady-going politicians, while it gave a fresh opening to the anti-British party. It was even considered necessary for the President to incorporate, in his Message to Congress (5th December), a statement that his Government would remain faithful to the precept of avoiding "entangling alliances," while in the "unfortunate contest in South Africa" it would remain neutral.

The legislation of the year (1899) was chiefly important from the fact that the Government were enabled to redeem the pledge given in the previous Session for establishing Municipal Boroughs in London. The Bill was officially resisted by the Opposition, but it was found to be so moderate in its provisions that no excuse was provided for representing it as an attack on the County Council, though the magnitude and richness of the area assigned to the Corporation of the City of Westminster created certain apprehensions, which, however, have not yet been justified. Another Bill in which Mr. Chamberlain was so much in-

terested that he was placed in charge of it was to enable the occupiers of small houses to become owners of them. The limit of value was fixed at £300, and the amount which the Local Authority was empowered to advance at £240. Those who had least faith in the advantages of the Bill could raise no objections to its principle—it only offered to artisans throughout the kingdom the same privileges as were enjoyed by Irish farmers, while no compulsion was to be exercised by the Local Authority on an unwilling vendor. Obviously, it was not a Measure which any member of Parliament with an eye on the General Election would seriously resist. An Amendment, proposed by a Radical member, to vest the freehold of houses thus acquired in the Local Authority, not in the purchasing occupier, was defeated by 249 votes against 62, and the subsequent course of the Measure was practically unopposed.

The incorporation of the territories hitherto governed by the Royal Niger Company within the British Dominion is described in another Chapter. It is sufficient to mention that in regard to this transaction certain personal and absolutely unfounded imputations were made on the Colonial Secretary. More embarrassing, because it was supported by opponents who felt no personal animus against him, was the charge that he had failed to execute his pledges with regard to Old Age Pensions. Though politicians on both sides of the House had given inconsiderate promises under this head, there could be no doubt that the expectation of something practical being done rested chiefly on Mr. Chamberlain. It was necessary to show that at least the intention had been sincere. On 24th April one of the Government Whips moved the appointment of a Select Committee to report on the whole question of providing for the Aged and Deserving Poor. Mr. Asquith seized the occasion to taunt Mr. Chamberlain with his unredeemed pledge, and, on his explaining that he had only invited discussion, and made a proposal purely on his own account,

wittily retorted that the proposal was good enough to found an action for breach of promise on! Before the Report of this Committee, over which Mr. Henry Chaplin presided, could be issued, the taunts to which Mr. Chamberlain was exposed led him to offer an explicit defence of his position.<sup>1</sup>

On 24th May, in reply to a Deputation from the Odd-fellows' Conference then sitting at Birmingham, he stated that he would not support any general scheme for giving weekly pensions (say 5s. a week) to every man or woman over sixty years of age. It would cost £34,000,000 a year. But even if such a sum could be raised by taxation the result would be mischievous. A gigantic scheme of Outdoor Relief for everybody would discourage thrift and encourage idleness and vice. There must be some test, and the test which he had always advocated was that the pensioner should have contributed through his working life to some Friendly Society. "Rome," he said, "was not built in a day: we shall not get Old Age Pensions in a week." But he had always believed, and still believed, that the principle was right, and might be so worked out as to contribute to thrift and not to discourage it. He even expressed a hope that before the end of the present Parliament "something considerable might be done in the direction of which he had spoken."

The report of Mr. Chaplin's Committee presented at the close of the Session concluded with the following recommendations:—

"(1) That a Pension Authority should be established in each Union of the country, to receive and to determine applications for pensions; (2) That the authority for this purpose should be a Committee of not less than six or more than twelve members appointed by the Guardians from their own number in the first instance; (3) That the Committee, when so appointed, should be independent of the Board of Guardians, and that other members should be added to it, subject to regulations to be made by the Local

<sup>1</sup> Further reference to this subject will be made in the last Chapter.



Government Board, and that it is desirable that other public bodies within the area should be represented on the Committee, and that a majority of the Committee shall be members of the Board of Guardians; (4) That the cost of the pensions should be borne by the common fund of the Union, and that a contribution, from Imperial sources, should be made to that fund in aid of the general cost of the Poor Law administration, such contribution to be allocated, not in proportion to the amount distributed in each Union in respect of pensions, but on the basis of population, not to exceed one-half of the estimated cost of the pensions; (5) That the amount of the pensions in each district should be fixed at not less than 5s. or more than 7s. a week, at the discretion of the Committee, according to the cost of living in the locality, and that it should be paid through the medium of the Post Office; (6) That the pension should be awarded for a period of not less than three years, to be renewed at the end of that period, but subject to withdrawal at any time by the Pension Authority, if in their opinion the circumstances should demand it. In order to facilitate the inquiries of the Pension Authority, and to prevent as far as possible attempts at fraudulent misrepresentation, we think that applications for a pension should be made on a prescribed form, and should be signed before a Justice of the Peace on oath, without fee. The machinery which we propose for the administration of a pension scheme in England and Wales may not, in some respects, be possible or equally suitable for Ireland and Scotland, and our recommendations are subject to such modifications as to machinery as may be necessary or desirable in the case of either of these countries."

Finally, the Committee considered the main objections which have been put forward against the above and similar pension proposals, and said:—"We are very sensible of the grave importance of the inquiry which has been committed to our care, and of the difficulties of the problem which it has been our duty to examine. We have given to

the subject, within the time at our disposal, the best attention in our power, and we make our proposals with the deference which is due to the opinions of others on a difficult and highly complicated question. But we believe that if they are adopted they will add to the comfort and improve the position of the aged and deserving poor."

Throughout the War period the hostility shown to Mr. Chamberlain proceeded less from the regular Chiefs of the Opposition than from a small group of Radicals who represented the antiquated doctrines of the Non-intervention and Peace-at-any-price School, who honestly believed that Great Britain had all along been in the wrong, but whose convictions on this point were obviously strengthened by their personal dislike of the Statesman whom they considered a renegade. When the new Session opened (30th January 1900), the chief Amendment to the Address was moved in the House of Commons by Lord Edmond Fitzmaurice, and expressed a general censure on the policy of the Government both in their conduct of the South African War and in their defective preparations for it. In his reply Mr. Chamberlain assumed the tone of a Statesman speaking rather for the whole country than for any Party, and, except for a few flings at Sir William Harcourt, was careful to avoid any semblance of aggression. After defending the policy which had preceded the War, he admitted that Ministers must expect to be criticised for any mistakes made and any checks encountered. At the proper time blame should be apportioned among those responsible, but the important thing at present was to retrieve such errors as had been committed.

Speaking while the memory of the "black week" in December 1899 was still fresh in men's minds, he declared that the spirit of the nation was unbroken, and that the country would shrink from no sacrifice demanded by the Government. He ridiculed the exultant declaration of certain foreign critics that the British Empire was bleeding to death and our *prestige* lost. Against the defects which had

been disclosed in our military system must be set the pride we felt in the gallant deeds performed by our troops from this country and the Colonies. There must be no second Majuba—never again should a citadel and centre of disaffection and race animosity be raised in South Africa. Never again should the Boers be allowed to threaten our supremacy or treat an Englishman as if he belonged to an inferior race. It was not true that gloom had settled down on the nation; the assistance given by the Colonies was a fact the importance of which could not be exaggerated. Never before had the Empire so fully realised its strength and unity. In this Federation of Race we found compensation for the evils of War!

From the tactical point of view, it was, undoubtedly, convenient to divert the attention of the House from the management of the War to the position of the country, and Mr. Chamberlain took full advantage of the latitude allowed by a Debate on the Address. But the resolute and cheerful air with which his words were spoken was the more useful since evidently it had not been assumed for Parliamentary purposes. Deeply involved as his reputation was in the fortunes of the War, discredited as he would have been if his "forward" policy in South Africa had resulted in an ignominious withdrawal, he was never tempted to exaggerate the magnitude of the "crisis"—he looked steadily at the facts and saw them in their real proportions. In this respect he faithfully interpreted and reproduced the feeling of the nation as a whole. The public gloom and despondency—of which so much was heard at the Clubs and the tea tables—never touched the English people. It was highly discreditable that so many public speakers and writers for the Press did their best to create a panic by suggesting that it had already set in. Looking back at the behaviour of our countrymen at the end of 1899 and the beginning of 1900, we are able now to realise that the great multitude of them went about their daily business just as if nothing particular were

happening in South Africa. They were happily unconscious that the nation was passing through a "period of trial"—that we were "struggling for honour, nay, for our very Imperial existence."

On the contrary, the ordinary Englishman regarded the War chiefly as the source of rather more exciting news than usual—it was specially interesting if he happened to have kinsmen or personal friends at the front. In fact he exhibited the same "British phlegm" and stolid fortitude which had carried his ancestors through life-and-death conflicts with nations as great as his own. We were "saved" from a "national peril," not because "our youth leapt to arms" or because "our sons over-sea" sailed across to rescue us, but because, as a people, we knew very well that we should win in the end, that somehow we should "muddle through," and that, meantime, we were in no kind of danger. The only contingency that might have been formidable would have been the armed intervention of one or more of the Great Powers. But it very soon became apparent that, however sincere they might be in their expressions of malevolence, there was no combination of them that cared to start business by trying issues with the British Navy. That being so, the only question for this country was how many millions of money it was prepared to spend, and how many lives it would risk, for a task which had proved to be even more formidable than the least sanguine of the experts had predicted.

For bringing the "crisis" to its proper bearings, Mr. Chamberlain deserved more gratitude than he has ever received. His reasoned optimism was the more effective because he always "had the ear of the public." It produced a better immediate result than the cool *insouciance* of Mr. Balfour or the *mitis sapientia* of the Prime Minister. They were solemnly lectured because they preached the equanimity which they practised, whereas the more rhetorical, though equally sane, exhortations delivered by

Mr. Chamberlain gave much comfort to a number of nervous persons who had set up as leaders of public opinion.

The short list of Measures promised in the Queen's Speech was too long for a Session which was almost entirely spent on matters relating to or arising from the War. The Bill for regulating Secondary and Technical Education in England and Wales only reached a Second Reading in the Upper House, and the substantive legislation consisted mainly of the Australian Commonwealth Act and certain minor Statutes relating to Tenants' Right in Great Britain, Limited Liability Companies, and Railway Accidents.

On 11th May Mr. Chamberlain once more took occasion to insist on the political importance of the Liberal Unionist Party, and incidentally remarked that he could see little difference between that and the Liberal Imperialist Party (recently founded by Lord Rosebery), except that they had separate Leaders. But his speech was not meant or interpreted as holding out any overtures for reunion. Its purpose was rather to expose the illogical position of a group of politicians who maintained a distinction which, it was argued, rested on no difference of principles. On the other hand, certain political gossips, hearing that Mr. Chamberlain's relations in the Cabinet with a leading Conservative colleague were not altogether harmonious, had busily put it about that a split was likely to occur in the Unionist Administration. The rumour was so persistent that the Party Managers thought proper to get up a public demonstration of amity. Mr. Balfour was invited to a Banquet (16th May) by the Liberal Unionist Club, at which the Colonial Secretary paid a graceful compliment to the personal qualities and political loyalty of the First Lord of the Treasury. Mr. Balfour, in reply, declared that any differences which had asserted themselves between the two Parties during their fourteen years of co-operation had run across both sections of the

alliance, and had caused no gulf between the Conservatives and Liberal Unionists. It was said that their alliance had finally "destroyed any disintegrating influence in the future." But while there were eighty votes in the House of Commons going a-begging, so long as Home Rule was not abandoned by the Liberal Party, so long would it be necessary to maintain the present Coalition. It showed, indeed, every sign of having acquired a permanent character, and might develop into an organisation fruitful of great results in the future.

These demonstrations, and others of the same kind, pointed to the sufficiently open secret that, unless something quite unexpected were to happen, this was to be the last Session of the existing Parliament. As to the policy of appealing to the country before the War had been brought to an end there was some division of opinion among the Unionists, but as a body they were inclined to favour Mr. Chamberlain's view that no time could be better than the present. The end of active operations had not yet been reached, but it was universally believed to be almost within sight. What could be more correct than for the Government which had carried out the Annexation of the Boer Republics to ask the country for a Mandate as to the settlement of the new Provinces? On the other hand, the Liberals, who had recently been demanding the Dissolution of Parliament, began to complain, when that step was imminent, that Ministers were playing for a Khaki Election, and hoped thus to obtain a majority which they might afterwards use in furtherance of their domestic policy. The unconcealed reluctance of the Radicals to go to the polls may have been the determining factor in Lord Salisbury's mind. An interesting though almost barren Session was wound up on 8th August, and on 18th September the Dissolution was announced.

Meantime, Mr. Chamberlain had prepared a bomb shell for the Radical group who had so bitterly attacked

his South African policy. Among the Papers discovered at Pretoria and Bloemfontein were a number of letters from Sir Henry de Villiers and other important persons in Cape Colony, which proved how stubbornly Mr. Kruger had defied the advice given him by the best representatives of Afrikaner opinion, and which went a long way to show that the offers repeatedly made by Mr. Chamberlain and Sir Alfred Milner were such as the President might and should have accepted. But it was not, one may fairly assume, only or mainly for the purpose of justifying the Government policy in South Africa on Afrikaner testimony that Mr. Chamberlain caused this Correspondence to be published, almost on the eve of the General Election. The letters written by three Radical members of the Imperial Parliament made it clear that up to the time when War was in sight two of them had been on intimate terms with agents of the Pretoria Government—one advising them how to evade the demands of the Colonial Secretary without proceeding to hostilities, and the other recommending the best manner for commencing military operations. The other Radical implicated in these documents had only asked to be supplied, after the War had begun, with a series of statements establishing the alleged inhumanity of British soldiers and officials.

As the avowed object of one at least of the writers was to "give Joe a fall," it was but natural that the object of this amiable intrigue should retaliate with the weapon thus opportunely placed in his hand. They had shown him no quarter. Why should he spare them? Moreover it was important that the country should be informed, on documentary evidence, what exactly had been the course followed by a certain small section of the Radical Party. No doubt, the exposure of these tactics was highly convenient to the Unionists; but, to refrain, on that ground, from performing a political duty would have been an excess of political self-sacrifice to which Mr. Chamberlain

never made pretences. It was by the choice of the Radicals themselves that what was conveniently, if not quite fairly, called the pro-Boer policy had been made to turn on a personal indictment of himself. He had never sought to separate his own action from that of his colleagues in the Cabinet; indeed, he had always sheltered himself, as was his right, under their collective responsibility, and claimed for them, as was his duty, a share in the credit for his success. Since his assailants insisted on raising a personal issue, what wonder that he should carry the war into their country; and deliver his assault just at the moment most advantageous to the Government.

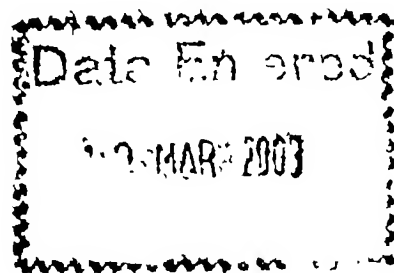
If Ministers were tactically wrong in challenging the opinion of the country while the War was still in progress, the blame must largely lie with Mr. Chamberlain who strongly advised that course. It was, as we know, justified by the immediate results. But it has since been open for the defeated Party to say that this "Khaki Election" did not represent the real opinion of the country, and that the "Mandate" then given to Ministers only applied to South African affairs. The doctrine implied has been repudiated by some of their own Leaders. Certainly the electors knew, when they cast their votes, that they were supporting a Ministry which might conceivably hold office for seven years, nor could they imagine that the principles of the South African settlement would occupy Parliament for the whole of that period. They were quite aware of the general policy, domestic and foreign, of the Party which was appealing for their verdict, and, if they had felt distrust, they should not have expressed confidence.

It cannot be denied, however, that it would have been wiser to defer the Dissolution if it had been possible to estimate the date at which Peace would be concluded. But, as things turned out, if Ministers had held on till the War was brought to an end, they would certainly have been accused of shrinking from the popular judgment and



prolonging their tenure of office beyond the usual term. Between the two courses—equally Constitutional—there was nothing very decisive to turn the scale. Ministers may well have thought that the paramount consideration was that, when the time should come for settling terms with the enemy, the negotiations should be conducted by a Government armed with full authority. It was well known that the Boer Leaders were spinning out the campaign with guerrilla operations simply in the hope that the War might thus be made to outlast the life of the existing Parliament. Rightly or wrongly, they believed—were led by their correspondents on the Continent to believe—that the Liberals would grant far more favourable terms than could be expected while Mr. Chamberlain was Colonial Secretary. They also believed—were also led to believe—that the defeat of the Unionists was practically certain. On his account if for no other, Lord Salisbury was justified in acting on Mr. Chamberlain's advice, and challenging the electors to give him and his colleagues a renewed Vote of Confidence. It was equally pedantic for his critics to suggest that he should have hesitated about taking this step just because it seemed convenient to his Party, and for his supporters to pretend that no political considerations entered into his mind.

END OF VOLUME I



The following information was obtained from the records of the [redacted] Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, regarding the [redacted] land grant.

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